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The Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta
[Les Bambara du Ségou et du Kaarta]

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2/ Monteil--i G-5 (1902-1923) 1924 FA8 Bambara FA8

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Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Chapter 1.	
Origin and History	3
Preliminaries	3
Map	4
1. Origin	6
2. History: History of the Empire of Segou; History of the Empire of Kaarta	23
Chapter 2.	
Concepts	132
1. Beliefs	132
2. Morality and Customs	142
3. Mantic, Religion, and Magic	146
Chapter 3.	
Communities.	171
1. General Considerations	171
2. The Patriarchal Community or Patriarchy	178
3. Family Community	213
4. Relations between Communities	241
Chapter 4.	
The Brotherhoods	254
1. The End of Childhood	254
2. General Considerations Concerning Brotherhoods	273
3. Some Important Brotherhoods	296
Chapter 5.	
The Clans	316
1. General Considerations	316

2: Monteil--ii G-5 (1902-1923) 1924 FA8 Bambara FA8

Table of Contents (cont'd)

000

	Page
Chapter 5 (cont'd)	
2. Clan of the People of Ségou	320
3. Clan of the Massa-si or the People of Kaarta	359
Chapter 6	
Islam	364
1. Islamism and Paganism	364
2. Agents of Islam	372
3. Results	378
Chapter 7. [not translated]	

000

List of End Plates

			Page
Plate 1.	Fig. 1.	Young Bambara from Djenné Region	381
	Fig. 2.	Bambara with the cap known as bamma da (crocodile's tail), Djenné Region	381
Plate 2.	Fig. 3.	Bambara girls in outdoor dress, Djenné Region	382
	Fig. 4.	Bambara women and girls about to set down burdens carried on their heads, Djenné Region	382
Plate 3.	Fig. 5.	Bambara with his cheeks slashed in imitation of the tattooing characteristic of the slaves of the Kouloubali, Djenné Region	383
	Fig. 6.	Woman and child, Djenné Region . .	383
Plate 4.	Fig. 7.	Penperenni, small dancers in costume	384
	Fig. 8.	N'Tomo mask decorated with cowries	384

2: Monteil--1 G-5 (1902-1923) 1924 FA8 Bambara FA8

[1] Introduction

161 According to the census referred to hereafter, the Bambara number more than 500,000, thus forming one of the largest population groups in West Africa.

184 This group is not homogeneous; however, in addition to its language, which is in fact its characteristic element, it does have certain basic customs common - at least in a general way - to all its members. It is possible to observe this common heritage by [121] studying one section of the group, and such is the purpose of this work.

121 The Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta, who concern us here, 127 have the distinction over their congeners of having evolved well-known empires. To the history of these empires, already known through the research of my predecessors, I shall add new documentation, based primarily on an unpublished chronicle of the empire of Ségou. This chronicle is interesting, among other reasons, because it is entirely the work of one of the traditionists whose erudition, as reliable and exact as possible within the limitations of native competence, merits our serious attention. Indeed, my book is simply a detailed commentary on this chronicle, buttressed by knowledge acquired on the spot during the course of my administrative duties and by information obtained from the works listed in the bibliography.

121 It should be noted that, though these documents and this store of knowledge make it easy enough to describe the customs if one limits oneself to generalities, it is on the other hand a difficult and delicate task to define the customs as they are applied to given social manifestations and to try to deduce the principles underlying these manifestations.

This is all the more true in that experience acquired elsewhere [2] is often, instead of a help, a reef which is as perilous as it is appealing. So it is that one is naturally tempted to apply to native institutions the nomenclature and the fundamental characteristics of institutions - especially European ones - which are assumed to be comparable. When origins and development are thus transferred to a foreign context, native custom is deformed. It can

keep its own features only on the native plane on which it was formed and developed.

I have not felt, however, that it was necessary to abandon entirely the French terminology which is familiar to us; it is sufficient to make it fit its new role. Indeed, it would be very difficult to limit oneself to native terms, since it would be awkward and even impossible to find expression in these terms for abstractions which the writer's analysis brings out and of which the native has no knowledge.

A study of custom in its intimate associations thus requires both method and experience if one hopes to arrive at precise facts which have logical interrelationships. The results thus obtained are certainly significant since they show that, perhaps from the very beginning and certainly from a very long time past, the native character follows a path which it has itself chosen and which we can only suspect, rather than observe. This is because the concrete facts which are the landmarks of that history are subject to various interpretations.

Today, dislocated by the collapse - thanks to our intervention - of the social framework in which he was developing, the native character is working out new spiritual directives based on its own past, making use of contributions of our civilizations whenever they are in accord with the native's own deepest tendencies. The present-day life of the Black man is merely the reflection of this mystique; hence, whatever may be our wishes in the matter and whatever may be the outward appearances, the Black man continues in all fields to be dominated by his past.

This fact would in itself justify a study such as the present one - if there were need for justification - for, in the matter of custom particularly, nothing that has happened in the past is unimportant when both the present and the future are closely and inevitably dependent on this past.

Orthez, February 22, 1923

[3] Chapter 1

Origin and History

Preliminaries

131 As they have for a long time past, the Bambara today occupy in compact groups a vast region on either side of the Niger, which comprises most of the territory in the circles [administration division] of Bammako, Bougouni and Ségou in the French colony of the Upper Senegal and Niger.

162 According to the census (1), the following list shows the

1. In Haut-Sénégal et Niger [The Upper Senegal and Niger], by Delafosse.

distribution of the Bambara in that colony:

Circle of Bougouni	146,966
" " Bammako	104,216
" " Ségou	109,758
" " Sikasso	30,000
" " Kita	2,339
" " Bafoulabé	2,100
" " Koutiala	30,055
" " Goumbou	22,110
" " San	20,103
" " Sokolo	19,996
" " Diénné	17,247
" " Niafounké	16,000
" " Nioro	9,355
" " Mopti	7,277
" " Bandiagara	928
Total	538,450

After the Mossi, this is the largest group in the colony of Upper Senegal and Niger.

121 This work deals only with the Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta since it has already been noted that, save for their specifically local history, [4] a study of their concepts and institutions is valid in general for all of the Bambara.

103 131 It is exceedingly difficult, besides, to be entirely certain as to which of the Bambara actually belong to the Kaarta and

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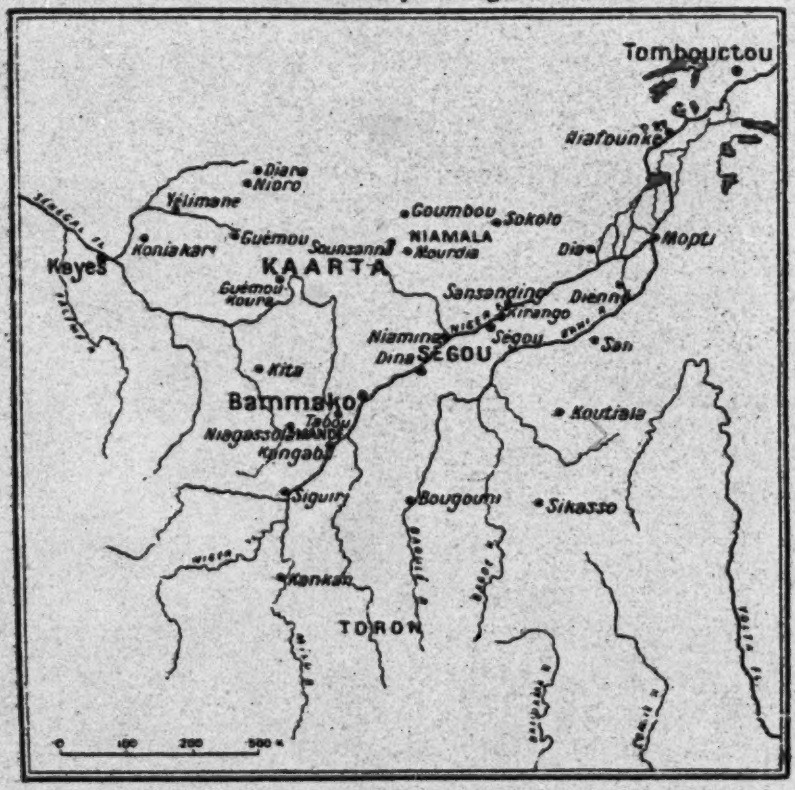

Ségou areas since the two designations do not correspond to any very exact geographical region. When a native speaks of Kaarta or of Ségou, he only vaguely understands the terms, and this with good reason.

101 103 131 I have noted elsewhere (1) that, etymologically speaking, the

1. In my work Les Khassonké [The Kasonke], which appeared in the series, Revue du Monde Musulman.

101 word which we write and pronounce Kaarta means "country of
103 the Karé" or, more accurately, "the group of the Karé." Wher-
131 ever there are Karé people they are called, in the Soninké language, Karu-ta, [5] which is contracted to Karta. From this we made Kaarta because we misheard the long first "a." The word Kaarta designates a particular area only because of the people who inhabit it, and its value as a geographical expression is acquired only by extension. Among the natives the term is used for various areas within the region which extends from Goumbou to Koniakari and from Nioro to the Senegal River. On our maps, Kaarta is bounded by Kingui on the north, Diomboko on the west, Senegal and Bélédougou on the south, and Kaniaga on the east. However, all of the names of cantons themselves have very vague meanings.

101 For the purpose of the present work, the word Kaarta takes
103 on a special meaning. The Bambara who founded a clan at
131 Sounsan-na in the Karé country are called Karta-n-ko in the
614 Soninké language and Karta-n-ka-u (the Kaarta people) in the Bambara language. As a result, Kaarta has become the name of the areas occupied by the clan in its various peregrinations.

The "people of Ségou" acquired their name in quite a different manner, since they were named for Ségou, the capital of the clan. The country of Ségou should be understood strictly to allude to the to-da which, to be described in chapter 5, was, by and large the area surrounding Ségou and occupied by the chief and his family and followers. In a wider sense, the country of Ségou referred to all the territory under the authority of the Ségou clan. At the height of the clan's power, "the country of Ségou" occupied both banks of the Niger, following the axis of the river from Kangaba to Timbuktu.

101 Our European need to have things clearly defined may be
131 satisfied by having the territorial limits of Kaarta and Ségou set
631 forth on a map, but on the native level, with which this book is primarily concerned, such local definition has little relevance. These empires did not aim to dominate any given area but rather sought to exploit as large a number of individuals as possible without regard to country or race.

128 Note: In the following pages, as well as in the foregoing, words in Bambara or other Sudanese dialects which are used are italicized; see Chapter 7 for explanations. [Omitted in translation.]

[7] I. Origin

Name

101 The peoples with whom this work is concerned are known, generally speaking, by the name of Bambara, both to Europeans and to most of the natives. They call themselves Banmana or Bamana.

European writers have offered two theories to explain the etymology of the words Bambara, Banmana and Bamana.

According to one school of thought, the word Bambara derives from bamba or bamma (crocodile) and alludes to a tne (1)

1, A magico-religious taboo, see Chapter 2.

which is reputedly common to all natives known as Bambara. This theory is nullified by the fact that the taboo, which was supposed to be generally imposed, is actually imposed on only a few of the Bambara. Further, the suggested correlation has never been proved to exist between the name of the tne and either individual or collective denomination among the Bambara.

Other authorities suggest that, according to the Banmana themselves, the word Banmana means "rejection of a master" (ban-ma-na) and alludes to the legend which tells how, early in the thirteenth century, the Banmana left their native land and went to Toron in order to escape from the yoke of their Malinké conquerors. This etymology, which is linguistically defensible, would apply only to the people who immigrated to Toron, and it still does not tell us by what name they and their congeners were known before the migration.

101 I have also been told that the words Bambara, Banmana and Bamana come from the Bambara root ban' or ba, meaning "to refuse." My informant, a Soninké, claimed that when their hegemony came to an end in the Ségou region, the Soninké noted a general rebellion among the serfs and said: "u bara bango bè la," which meant (1) "They have refused (to submit) [8] on

1. According to the aforesaid informant.

all sides." And this same informant added that, when the rebels later returned and made peace with their masters, they put the following question: "au mar' kan'," meaning (2) "Under what conditions will you keep us?" The word Bambara would thus derive from the first expression and the word Marka (2) from the second.

2. According to the same informant.

I mention this interpretation as an example of the etymologies which are entirely made up by the informants and to which one can attach significance only after rigorous and critical investigation. In this case I have no doubt whatever that my informant's two expressions were invented for the occasion and that they are worthless; indeed, I cannot understand at all the translation of the second expression, au mar' kan'.

I am convinced that the natives simply do not know the origin of the name Bambara or its variants, or rather that they are incapable of explaining it.

However, it does seem likely that the words Bambara, Banmana and Bamana are actually derived from the same root ba. Thus, if the final na, a collective suffix, is removed from the word banmana, we are left with banma, a word which is comparable, morphologically speaking, to finma. The latter means "black" in Bambara and it may be replaced with fin' and fi without change of meaning: by analogy one is led to say that ban' and ba are, in the same way, equivalents of banma.

101 It is interesting to compare these two monosyllables with the Peul [Fulani] word bal, which also means "black" and which can also be spelled ba since its final l, like the n' in ban', is merely euphonious. The comparison is valid because Peul is by origin a Negro language native to the area and, further, because a comparative study of the Sudanese dialects has shown much mutual borrowing of words.

From all this I conclude that the term Bambara and its variants likewise signify "black men."

Further, foreigners and their half-caste or naturalized offspring, all of whom we include under the name Peul, ruled over western Sudan in early times, and it is reasonable to suppose that the name Bambara dates from that period and represents the name by which the Peul rulers designated the natives. [9] Or, it may be safer to say that the word Bambara and its variants derive from the same root ba, meaning "black," which came from an ancient dialect of which the modern Peul language is also an offshoot.

However that may be, the designation Bambara, which is used generally throughout western Sudan, has many meanings today. For the Moslem, the Bambara is the infidel, the pagan, the drinker of alcohol; for the pastoral peoples (Moors and Peuls), he is the farmer and also the Negro. For Semites and those who claim to be Semites, he is principally the Negro. For those who were or are rulers, he is the slave; and for all he is the primitive man who is socially inferior.

101 578 The word Bambara has shared the same fate as the word Peul in that it is used simply as an epithet: the name Bambara is applied to all pagans (1), farmers, slaves and black men. Indeed

1. "... It is absolutely certain that in the minds of Sudanese Moslems in general and of those living at the mouth of the Niger in particular, the word Bambara is applied, not to any particular people, nor to a specific tribe, but rather to all Sudanese who have remained faithful to the native religion." (Delafosse, Vol. 1, p. 126).

101 the word has so thoroughly taken on a pejorative sense that its
578 use may be a grave insult. What an insult it would be for a Moslem to be called a Bambara, i.e., an infidel, a pagan and an alcoholic!

101 In the strictest sense, however, the word Bambara is applied by the Malinké and, following their lead, by the French only to natives who speak the Bambara dialect and who call themselves Banmana or Bamana. Barring specific exceptions, we shall henceforth use the word in this limited sense in the present work.

X 173 It is evident from the foregoing remarks that the Bambara belong to very ancient indigenous families; indeed, they themselves consider this to be so, and they are so considered by others.

Native informants are likely to say that the Bambara are former slaves of the Malinké; but they also say that the Somono are former slaves of the "Ségou people." Later on (see Chapter 4), we shall see in what sense [10] this slavery should be understood. It was a characteristic result of the political form of the native governments.

101 In addition to the general name given to them or accepted by them, which applies to one or another group, the Bambara are designated by terms expressing their geographic distribution. There are, for instance, those who live at Bélédougou (called Beledugu-ka-u); those in the Kaarta area (Karta-n-ka-u); those at Ségou (Segu-n-ka-u); those around Bani-n-ko (Bani-n-ko-ka-u). Each of these expressions also has a political connotation; Ségu-n-ka-u is often used for members of the ruling party, which holds power at and operates from Ségou, and only the context or the drift of the conversation will make it possible to know what people are actually being discussed.

Among themselves the various Bambara groups often describe one another by nicknames. The "Kaarta people" ironi-
[302] cally call the "Ségou people" Tlu-kene-u, "those with a single braid," because of a peculiar way of doing their hair, or Nya-ni-Nyéle-u, because Nya and Nyélé are popular names for women among the people around Ségou.

101 It is common, too, to call all the members of a clan by a
614 name derived from that of a clan founder or ancestor. Thus, the

B 101 614 Kaarta people are called Nya-Ngolo-la after Nya-Ngolo, an ancestor of the chiefs of the clan; and the Ségou people are called Barama-Ngolo-la after Barama-Ngolo, an ancestor of their clan.

B S 101 [567] Nicknames are also used between individuals of different tribes. The Soninké often call the Bambara Dyon-ko (slaves) because, having long been engaged in the slave trade, they sold many Bambara as slaves (1). The Bambara generally call the

1. See in the Kaarta chronicle which follows how Massa and others after him captured caravans of Bambara slaves belonging to Soninké owners.

Soninké Marka (for Mara-ka). They still use the term Marka dialan'u (dry Marka people) to designate the Soninké who abandoned their own dialect in favor of the Bambara dialect. On the other hand, they use the term Marka kan'-fo-la-u (those who speak Marka) for those among the Soninké who have retained their own dialect.

In the Ségou region, the Bambara use the expression Bani-n-kono-u (birds of the Bani) for the Soninké, people who live along the banks of [11] that river; their more general term for the Soninké is the surname Dyeme-ka-u, from Dyeme (or Dyime) meaning "a long-legged water bird" of the marabou species. According to the interpretation given to me, the names Bani-n-kono-u and Dyeme-ka-u allude to periodic journeys made by the Soninké to the large commercial centers to the south, especially Ouorodougou [Ouagadougou?].

The Ségou country was called Dyeme-ka-u by the Bambara during the period of the Soninké rule (1). On the other hand, when

B S 172 101 1. At this period, the Soninké chief, Souleiman-ba Kofta, lived at Sora, today a ruin, which the Bambara call Soro-toumou (ruins of Sora) and which is situated in the Ségou country between Massa-la and Kono-dimini.

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Sora was the capital of a territorial district called Tandougou.

The songs of the gessere, who are the Soninké equivalents of the Bambara dyeli, often tell of Souleiman-ba Kolta, of Sora and Tandougou.

the Bambara came into power, the Soninké called it Dyon-ka-dugu (land of slaves).

Origin

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*173 The tradition which is generally accepted, and which was first reported by Raffenel and Quintin, has it that the ancestors of the Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta came originally from Toron, a region situated at the headwaters of the Milo and the Baoulé, both tributaries of the upper Niger. From there they presumably moved in a northeasterly direction and then spread out toward their present habitat and developed the empires of Ségou and Kaarta (2).

2. "An oft-reported tradition says that the Banmana came from Toron, the eastern province of Oussoulou, situated in the present colony of the Ivory Coast. It was on the route between Odienné and Sikasso, not far from the former. It seems, indeed, likely that the original habitat of the Banmana was located in the extreme southeast corner of the cradle of the Mandé family and that it extended from the right bank of the upper Niger, approximately near Siguiri, to the left bank of the upper Bagbé (or Bagoé), where it touched the territory of the Sénoufo [Senufo] people. The first conquests of the Mandingue [Mondingo]

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emperors around the beginning of the thirteenth century established the Malinké people on the right bank of the upper Niger and no doubt forced the Bambara to settle between the upper Baoulé and the upper Bagbé, precisely where Toron is to be found." (Delafosse, op. cit., 283-284)

However, as is usually the case with history told by native traditionists this was by no means a mass migration but, rather, merely a traditional explanation for the arrival in the Ségou and Kaarta regions of the ancestors of the Kouloubali who founded the clans of Ségou and of Kaarta. I have no doubt whatever [12] that, long before their arrival, there were Bambara settled in Ségou and Kaarta in the very places they often still occupy today (1).

1. For example, from the time of his installation, and even during his father's lifetime, Massa came into conflict with the Bambara of Niamala. And when he attacked the Soninké, the latter called for the help of their own Bambara people, who had been there for a very long time and who had nothing to do with any migration from Toron. The Bambara of Bélédougou claim that they have always been the masters of their lands, and they are so recognized.

On the other hand, according to reliable native informants who are known to be well-informed about the traditions, and whom I interviewed at Médine, Kita, Bammako, Ségou and Djenné and also according to the dyeli Karé Tamoura, (2) Toron

2. See the following section: History (Sources).

1 [for information on Massa, see cat. #73, pp. 113 ff. - Analyst]

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*173 is not the cradle of the Bambara with whom we are here concerned, even though it was a region from which Bambara migrations originated. These same informants say that the ancestors of these Bambara came from Mandé, whose capital, in the most remote times, was Dakadiala, known today as Kirikoroni, in the canton of Kiri whose present-day cantonal headquarters is at Niagassola.

F
101 At this point, it seems necessary to explain the meaning
103 of the word Mandé, which appears so often in the history of western Sudan.

Authors agree among themselves and with native traditionists that Mandé is the name of a territorial district which, at various times, was near the left bank of the Niger between Kangaba and Bammako. However, the boundaries of the area remain uncertain and variable as does the location of the capital, which tradition has placed at different periods at Dakadiala, at Tabou, at Kounfangué, at Figuira, at Kangaba, at Niani, etc. In point of fact, however, so far as we know, there is no country actually named Mandé and there has never been such a country. What then is this name?

It is agreed that the forms Mandé, Mandi, Manden, Mandin, Mandeng, Manding, Mali, Malé, Malel, Melli, etc., all of which are or have been used, are merely variants of the same expression in different dialects. [13] However, no one has interpreted the validity of these terms.

Now it appears that, in the Soninké language, the word Mandé (1) is made up of ma and de, linked by the connective n;

1. The form Mandi can be analyzed in the same way in Soninké.

the particle de, which corresponds to our prepositions "at", "in," and "at the house of," comes from a root meaning "place." As for ma, it means "master," "lord" or "king," so the word Mandé means "at the house of the king," or "place or residence of the king."

This is precisely the interpretation given by the Tarikh

101 el Fettach for the variant madugu (2): "The word madugu is the
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> 2. This belongs to the Malinké dialect, in which dugu means "place," not "earth."

name given in the Tekrour(western Sudan) to any royal residence, wherever it may be." (page 335 of the translation). The Tarikh es-Soudan also says that the word madugu means "palace of the king" (French translation, p. 151).

103 644 In principle, each chief establishes his capital wherever he pleases and, in view of the extreme uncertainties of political life in this part of the world, this residence is often moved. We shall see an example of this mobility in the case of the Bambara-Massa-si of Kaarta. In general, the same situation prevailed in the other empires, and there is no doubt that it was so for the Mandé.

That is how it has happened that the word Mandé and its variants have designated the most diverse localities which, at one time or another, have served as royal residences or, more often, as headquarters or capitals. Sometimes these places were referred to by their own names, with madugu added, e.g., Nianimadougou. Or madugu might accompany the name of the territorial district to designate the capital, e.g., Sana-madougou, near Sansanding on the Niger. The word madugu and its variants have often been used for no particular reason. So it is that the Tarikh-es-Soudan and the Tedzkiret-en-Nisian often allude to Madoho, Madoko or Madougou, a former royal residence of the king of Mali at Timbuktu. In the same way, Ibn Batouta never tells us the name of the capital he visited but merely calls it by the variant Mali, the equivalent of Madougou. This is the origin of the various names mentioned in the foregoing [14], which, etymologically speaking, might be applied to any headquarters or capital but which, because of long custom, refer only to the capital of Mandé, a territorial district that takes its name from the capital.

101 103 This double meaning of the word Mali or Melli, for example, meaning capital and country of the capital at the same time, is evident in the travel record of Ibn Batouta. The same

F 101 103 double meaning is no less evident in the Tarikh-es-Soudan, especially on p. 161 of the French translation. The same double usage is evident in oral traditions.

Thus it is understandable that the word Mandé has come to be considered as an equivalent of our words "empire" and "kingdom" when they are used in a geographical sense, and that, as a result, the term has varied in application because it depended on an ever-changing territorial domain subject to the domination of successive ma.

M F 103 642 However, it is not only from the geographical point of view that the term Mandé has remained indefinite or vaguely defined; the same uncertainty prevails on the political level. In a general way, Mandé is considered to be exclusively the empire of the Mandingue people, who are one of the subdivisions of the group called Mandé by the Europeans (1). In order to

> 1. Mandé, as the name for a group of peoples or of native languages, is unknown to the Sudanese; in this sense it is used exclusively by the Europeans.

understand the meaning attached to the word "empire" in western Sudan, it is essential to place oneself on the native level and not on that of our European civilization from which the term is borrowed.

F B 103 642 [614] Briefly, the Sudanese empire is a system of clans. It is formed by bringing together of elements taken over from clans that have either disintegrated or are in the process of doing so. It acquires power and extension through the influence of the founder or, less frequently, of one of his successors, and then falls into decline at the hands of enemies or as a result of schisms which arise at the death of the ruler on whose success and "flair" its fortunes have depended.

It is this constantly repeated process of grouping, separation and regrouping which dominates the entire [15] history of the Sudanese empires and dynasties and which makes any study of the people so very difficult. The geographical nomenclature is,

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F B 101 103 of course, dependent on these social facts. Often a region is named after the people who inhabit it as, for instance, is the case with Kaarta. It may also derive its name from a dominant political group, and when a region has been ruled by successive groups, it acquires a series of superimposed names even though the territories to which they apply may not necessarily be identical; this, too, applies to Kaarta -- a poorly defined region.

This explains how it came about that different empires were lumped together under the same name, Mandé (and other variants). The empire ruled by the Keïta chiefs was merely the last to arise and it presumably dates from the beginning of the thirteenth century.

B *173 M 173 One tradition has it that the ancestors of the founders of this thirteenth-century empire came from the east -- specifically from Kong (1). Under the leadership of Kabala Simbo Keïta,

1. I see in this precision nothing more than the usual polarization of which I speak on p. 45 , note 1 .

they settled in Dodougou, a canton whose capital was at Tabou and whose chief, a Bambara of the Konnaté dyamu maintained his power with the help of a militarized group called Mandinké. This was a group similar to those composing the sofa, ton-dyon' or furu-ba-dyon' who supported the fortunes of the clans of Ségou and Kaarta. In the Soninké language the word mandinké means, M literally, "a person of the master's (or lord's or king's) house- [101] hold," and in the plural it means "the master's (or king's) people."

The canton of Kiri (2), adjoining that of Dodougou, was

2. The Dodougou (abbreviated to Do) and the Kiri are, indeed, considered to be the oldest cantons of the so-called Mandé clan. In this connection, see Humblot, "Du nom propre et des appellations chez les Malinké ..." [On Proper Names

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and Appellations among the Malinké...] in the Bulletin du Comité des études historiques et scientifiques de l'A.O.F. 1918, nos. 3 and 4.

inhabited by independent Bambara.

This clan or, as one is tempted to say, this empire of Kelta was formed in the thirteenth century after wars between Soumangourou Kanté and Soun Dyata Kelta and with the aid of various elements (3), including a group of Mandinké which

3. In the same way we shall see Biton forming furu-ba-dyon' from the ton-dyon', slaves captured from the chief of Dina, and from captives acquired elsewhere. In the same connection, see in the Tarikh el Fettach the curious story of the 24 slave tribes of the Songhaï clan which came from the Mandé clan.

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[16] had been organized earlier by (1) a chief named Gourmandaga.

1. Within the clan, the slaves, who always constitute the power of a clan, are divided into groups named in accordance with a particular aspect of organization. The Boula seem to have enjoyed a degree of consideration comparable to that attained by the Ton-dyon' at Ségou. Judging by the meaning of the word Bula, it would seem that they were "freedmen," and this is the meaning given by native traditionists. On the subject of the Boula, see the afore-mentioned work by Humblot. Boula women have the given name of Damba and they are addressed as Sakiliba, while the men are called Soussoro. This practice of giving a common name to a whole

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M 567 category of slaves is also found among the Rimaïbé people of Macina, all of whom may be called Tammoura or Tamboura.

B *173 This group was that of the Boula, who made a fortune from both M 173 Soumangourou and Soun Dyata by supporting alternately the one or the other until Soun Dyata finally prevailed.

These people, who are called Mandinké by the Soninké, M 101 Maninka by the Bambara, and Mallinké by the Peul, call themB 173 selves Mandinga. It should be noted, however, that the Mandinké do not date from the thirteenth century empire of the Kefta but are rather of earlier origin than that clan. It is my opinion that *173 they derive originally from very ancient Soninké clan groups in the process of breaking up, from which they acquired their essential elements and their name. The name, indeed, refers to a social group which is identical with that of the furu-ba-dyon', described hereafter in Chapter 5, and the same group was established in the same way by the Bambara, i.e., by the Blacks, the natives of various races. In any event, this is said in the traditions told to me.

M B 174 Furthermore, I do not think that all the Bambara peoples who today occupy the area under consideration are accounted for by the migrations of the Bambara-speaking Bambara from the aforesaid Mandé region at the time when the Kefta clan took over that region in the thirteenth century. I believe that, in the geographical region known to us under the names Mandé, Toron, Baninko, Ségou, Bélédougou and Kaarta, there have been Bambara-speaking Bambara since well before the thirteenth century.

The Kouloubali

B *173 The migrations of which the traditionists tell us invariably refer only to the movements of [17] certain families who were more or less important and who had usually figured prominently in clan affairs. As far as Ségou and Kaarta are concerned, the traditions apply solely to the Kouloubali chiefs of these clans and clearly indicate that they found other similar Bambara families already long settled in these and surrounding regions.

*173 In addition to the traditions reported in what follows and emanating from the dyeli traditionists, Karé Tammoura and Gran Koaté, I was given the following explanations concerning the Kouloubali.

According to the first version, the sons of one Péné Kouloubali left Kéniéroba (1), northwest of Kangaba, in order to

1. The period, undefined as always, certainly antedates the seventeenth century.

escape from the pursuit of their enemies. There were three brothers: Mamourou, the eldest, Nzan and Ngolo. They settled in Bani-n-ko at Dougouna, in the home of a blacksmith named Sékolo Balo. When their enemies followed them there, they fought for a year, and then Mamourou persuaded his brothers to flee. So they left, taking Sékolo Balo with them.

They crossed the Baoulé at Kana, thanks to the help of a poyon' who offered to ferry them since they had no boat. Ngolo, who was the last to cross, killed the poyon' and carried the body to Dionforongo (east of Barouéli) where he ate it.

The three brothers came to Ségou-koro-si-do (2), then to

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2. Si-do: "the forest of butter-trees," a place said to be near Ségou-koro.

Sinsala, so named because of the "enclosure" (sinsa) built there by the Bozo, and better known as Sansanding. There, Mamourou advised separating, the better to elude their pursuers. Mamourou returned to Ségou-koro-si-do, and his descendants are the Kouloubali of that region.

Nzan settled near Ségala in a place called Sanabala after his wife Sanaba, by whom he had a son Nto. Nto had a son named Kéfa, who fathered Sama. The latter had four sons: Sara, who lived at Salaga; Touman, at Toumanbougou; Fara, at Diakoro; and Demba at Donguélé.

Ngolo settled at Kourouma, where he became one of the ancestors of the Kouloubali of that region. He married a Moorish

*173 half-breed named Barikɛ́ and by her had a son, [18] Dagoumou, who fathered Siratigui. The latter was himself the father of Mamourou, who fathered Dyiguina, who fathered Bɔ-dyan. This last gave birth to Mɛ́lɛ́-fin and Mɛ́lɛ́-dyɛ́. Mɛ́lɛ́-dyɛ́'s son, Sidi Bala, was put to death by the fama of Ségou, Ngolo Dyara.

According to another version, two Kouloubali brothers, Ntchi and Ntchian, left the Mandé area during the struggles between Soumangourou and Soun Dyata. Ntchi, who was the first to reach the river, bemoaned his lack of a boat and called upon his ancestors for aid. A poyon' suddenly appeared and said: "If the sons of Adam were not such ingrates, I should certainly have ferried you across." Ntchi begged the poyon' to have mercy upon him and his people and swore that, in return, the poyon' would forever after be tne for himself and all his descendants. The poyon' allowed itself to be persuaded and ferried Ntchi and his followers.

When Ntchian reached the river the same scene took place. But when all his people were safe, one of Ntchian's wives, by the Tangara dyamu, cried out: "If you don't kill this fish, our children, who are starving, will be dead by night." Pretending not to hear her, Ntchian mounted his horse and sought to leave. But his wife seized his bridle and once more begged him to kill the fish and to save her children. This time he did so.

That is why only the descendants of Ntychi consider the poyon' as tne.

Ntchi settled in Niamana, near Niansonna to the west of Baroéli, where he became the chief. Dissension arose among his descendants; so some of them went to Ségou near Ségou-koro and others to Kaarta.

Ntchian settled at Nani in the eastern part of Bendougou not far from the present village of Nionsira. Since he was of a quarrelsome nature, he feuded with the chief of Nani and forced him to leave. It is said that the chief had a flute made from the hinges of his door and that it was to the sound of this flute that he departed. He went to Farabougou, to Souala, and then to Ngonifembougou (still called Monimpé) near Dia-kolo.

Ntchian pursued him and settled at Dia-kolo. His descendants suffered the great famine that lasted for seven years and that

*173 is known as the solo (1); they sought [19] a remedy to this

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1. Solo is a woman's surname.

calamity by emigrating. Some went to Dia-bolo near Djenné; others went to Nya Ngolo-la in Kaminiadougou.

Is there a relationship between the origin of the Kouloubali family just discussed and that of the Kouloubali founders of Ségou and Kaarta? I have no doubt that there is, because all the Kouloubali go back to a common ancestor prior to the thirteenth century, one of whose descendants, allying himself by marriage to the Kefta clan, founded the branch of Kouloubali composed of the so-called masa-rin' families (1).

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1. By the term masa-rin', the traditionists mean, in addition to the ruling Kefta and their followers, various families who are closely connected with them. The following are prominently mentioned: the Kouloubali, the Konaté and the Kourouma. Not all the members of these dyamu, even the Kefta, are masa-rin'; only certain branches are.

The Bambara of the Tarikh-es-Soudan

175 The Bambara, established in the area with which we are concemed before or after the Kouloubali, whose traditions we have just discussed, have no precise traditions - at least none which give any detail. The general history of all of these peoples is doubtful.

To be sure, the Tarikh-es-Soudan does allude to the Bambara, but it is difficult to tell in what sense the term is used, since it often simply means "pagans." However, in the following citations, it seems to me that the Tarikh does refer to the Bambara here studied, all the more so because in this chronicle,

175 the principalities of Kala, Bendougou and Sébéridougou correspond to territories west of Djenné and Dia which have been under the domination of the clans of Ségou and Kaarta.

The Tarikh-es-Soudan reports: "When Askia Daoud was addressing the chief of Djenné, El Amin, he said: 'We put you at the head of a district and you are not watching over it properly, because the Bambara have managed to acquire privileges which they had ceased to have.'" This was in 1558 and the last words in the passage show that before that period the Bambara had enjoyed an important position.

According to the same chronicle, when the Moroccans arrived in 1691 [sic, probably 1501] [20] the countries of the middle Niger which had been enjoying relative peace under king Soughaï, were being terrorized, especially around Djenné, by the Bambara aided, incited and even led by the Peul chief of Macina.

In 1599 a great many Bambara had been recruited into the army of Macina by Hamedi Amina, the sultan of the country, who was stirring up a general rebellion against the Moroccans.

In 1600, on orders from the Moroccan pasha Djouder, the caïd [alcaide] El Mostapha-et-Torki led an expedition against Macina, and the Bambara, having been abandoned by the people of Macina, were cut off in a forest and massacred in large numbers.

In 1644, when his troops were fleeing before the combined forces of the pasha and the askia, Hamedi Amina had to flee also, leaving quantities of booty behind. He and his followers took refuge with the Bambara, who appropriated anything that came within their borders.

Finally, the Tarikh-es-Soudan mentions that in 1645 the Bambara rebelled against the chiefs of Sana and Farko and sacked Sibila, the capital of the Sana region.

It is of course true that account must be taken of the fact that Es-Sadi, the author of the Tarikh-es-Soudan, is likely to include all pagans under the designation "Bambara." However, there is no ground for assuming that the Bambara with whom we are concerned are not meant when it is a question of the regions mentioned in the citation. Indeed, the contrary is the case, since

175 no other pagan people of the area has such a long tradition of warlike actions.

*173 175 The old Sudanese chronicle never mentions a Bambara king. According to the traditionists, the Bambara villages of the area lived independently of each other before the time of Biton. They sometimes embarked on joint raids against certain neighbors or carried out other important enterprises together. On such occasions they used bands organized and equipped in line with the usual native practice (1).

1. See in the foregoing how they acted as mercenaries to the sultan of Macina, for example.

[21] There is nothing surprising in the fact that a chief of one of these bands may have succeeded in creating a kind of empire in the manner of a Samori. Indeed, according to Quintin (1) there is a tradition that a certain Kaladian Kouloubali,

1. See also Delafosse in this connection.

a descendant of Barama Ngolo and living at Markadougou-ba, established his authority over both banks of the Niger in the Ségou area around 1600, either by his own efforts or aided by his sons. The Tarikh-es-Soudan makes no mention of this ruler, nor does the dyeli Karé Tammoura. History in that part of the world abounds in missing links and divergencies of this kind.

Kaladian's empire probably did not last long in any case, but Biton Kouloubali, founder of the empire of Ségou which we shall discuss, was precisely the grandson of Kaladian through Soma and Danfassari.

2. History

Sources

Thus, a general history of the Bambara is yet to be written; all that is known in any detail relates to the clans of Ségou and of Kaarta and, even in this limited area, the knowledge is anything but well-documented.

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175 The literature on the subject that has already been published, as well as the accounts given here, necessarily rests on native traditions which are vague, confused and shrouded in legend, and it is difficult to establish real, precise and consistent facts from such sources. So it is that we shall later see, presented as a fact in the earliest history of the clan of Kaarta, that the old fa Siné only granted hospitality and a limited alliance to Sounsan because a bird had told him of the power that was eventually to accrue to the family of the fugitive.

Also in this connection there is, for example, a version concerning Mamari, called Biton Kouloubali, the founder of the clan of Ségou. Mamari had created a garden on the banks of the Niger for his mother. It was there, one day, that a "water genie" (dyiden') appeared to him at the very spot where Monseigneur Hacquart died. [22] The genie urged Mamari to follow and was so insistent and so persuasive that Mamari yielded (1).

1. On the subject of water genies, compare this legend with the tales entitled "Les Dyide de Djenné" [The Water Genies of Djenné] in Contes du Sénégal et du Niger [Tales of the Senegal and the Niger] by Zeltner, pp. 173 ff.

Drawn by his guide, he penetrated to the depths of the water without the least discomfort and so came to a miraculous city. There, the genie showed him a heap of gold and silver and a pile of grain and said: "Choose: gold and silver mean wealth; grain means power. Now what does wealth signify if one is at the mercy of a powerful man; the master controls everything. If, however, you choose the grain, sow it in an enormous field and work hard to have a large harvest. Then leave the harvest to the birds and your power will extend to all the lands touched by the marauding birds."

Mamari carried off the grain, preserved it carefully and, when winter came, sowed it in an enormous field. During the whole season he worked hard at cultivating and, when harvesttime

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175 came, everyone was astounded to see him leave everything for the birds.

The oracle was fulfilled at once. Biton ruled from Timbuktu to the Atlantic. And the dyeli, Karé Tammoura, who told me the legend, adds that thereafter there was a very strange thing at Ségou: a combination animal and plant which the Bambara called Sanu-so or "golden horse." Ahmadou, the son of Omar, had a mosque erected on the spot where Sanu-so was wont to appear but, all the same, it did not disappear until the arrival of the French. Even since then, there are those who say that on certain days strange lights appear at the spot on the Niger where Monseigneur Hacquart died and where the genie appeared to Mamari.

[171] This fable about a local genie is not in itself remarkable, but when compared to the legend about Ngolo Dyara (see later, p. 51) and to many other similar ones current in the Sudan (2),

2. See, especially, the legend of Ndyadyane Ndyaye in "Légendes et coutumes sénégalaises [Senegalese Legends and Customs] by H. Gaden, 1912, and the "Dyide de Djenné" in Contes du Sénégal et du Niger, by Zeltner.

what it really is becomes clear: the figurative expression of a native mentality about which the European is usually very ill-informed and which deserves to be noted here briefly.

778 [23] Anything that departs from the average, the ordinary, or the normal -- power, wealth, success, ... illness, poverty, misfortune -- to any extraordinary degree or in a suspicious way, is, for the Bambara in particular and for the Black in general, the manifestation of an occult force acting either spontaneously or after provocation.

643 That is why, in the eyes of a native, a chief (a paramount 778 chief, of course) is out of the common run, not so much because of the position he occupies as because of the magic powers attributed to him (1). Power is merely the reflection of his

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1. Compare, on p. 31 and p. 49, the conduct of Dina Wara and of Biton.

efficacies in magic and he himself is convinced that this is true. Everything he does is accepted without protest because his acts have a supernatural character. The only ones who can resist him are those who, like him, have special powers (2). Therefore he

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2. Legendary traditions abound in magic combats; see especially the tradition concerning Dinga, the ancestor of the Wagadou people, and that concerning Samba Guéladio Diégui, the hero of Fouta.

makes a point of seeking the company and advice of initiates in matters that are hidden from the common herd. These are the sorcerers, magicians and marabouts, all of whom believe that they possess -- or appear to possess -- a share in the knowledge that allows its practitioners to influence the unseen. Sometimes he is one of them or becomes one, and in any event he is always, willingly or not, dependent upon them.

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This is an age-old state of mind, which Islam has merely strengthened, for the Black man, whether Moslem or not, always regards the marabout as a diviner, a performer of miracles, a maker of philters, talismans and amulets, and a caster of spells. Many facts attest the truth of this observation, and the tales which follow will afford examples.

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It is understandable that with such beliefs[1] the Black man could hardly be expected to admit that the life of an important person, a powerful chief or a founder of an empire, could possibly be or have been banal, ordinary or simple. That is why supernatural, fictitious deeds make up such a large part of the native historical traditions that one may look in vain for any trace of the actions we see performed around us day after day. One must be very thoroughly accustomed to this delusion in order not to give way to discouragement at being unable to grasp

[1] [i.e., in magical and occult power with influence over the supernatural.--Analyst]

*173 something whose strangeness places it outside our [24] understanding or what is worse, not to be deceived into interpreting this incoherent jumble simply to fit a preconceived theory.

*173 814 To these reflections of the native mentality must be added the deformations in the hands of the collectors of historical traditions (1): the dyeli among the Bambara. This word dyeli,

1. Here called "traditionists."

meaning "master," shows the esteem accorded, in principle, to the archivist, which is what each dyeli should be. Indeed the job consists essentially in preserving from oblivion the genealogy and in celebrating -- by magnifying them -- the achievements of the personage to whom the dyeli is attached. As a result, the dyeli extends his inquiries to all who come into contact with his lord, so that in fact he becomes the historian of an entire family, an entire clan and even an entire tribe.

[555] The dyeli's great erudition and, even more, his skill in making the most of his superficial knowledge bring it about that the esteem in which he is held takes the practical form of gifts -- often so considerable as to make the dyeli very prosperous indeed. Therefore, the majority of dyeli, being less anxious to safeguard truth than to increase their own fortunes, flatter or slander, as required, those on whom they impose their services, so as to profit as much as possible. It is because of this sort of corruption that the dyeli is often scorned.

Dyeli who have kept their integrity are rare; those who possess extensive knowledge and sufficient critical sense to make a wise selection from the mass of contradictory traditions are rarer still.

In general, each dyeli works only within the very restricted limits of a clan tradition, plus a few family traditions; he is entirely ignorant of anything that concerns neighboring clans and families and, especially, people outside his own tribe and race.

The dyeli preserves in his memory the historical tradition and hands it down. Thus, since each dyeli works entirely independently, he can add any fantasies he pleases, spread them abroad, and pass them off for truth, which is accepted as such and passed on by others.

*173 These, in brief, are the difficulties encountered in dealing with sources for native historical tradition. When Islam introduced [25] a written language, there was created a new category of archivists, the marabouts. They have added this duty to many others; it cannot be proved that they have purged the job of its former vices, but it may be stated categorically that they have added a few new ones.

It is notorious that, in the Sudan, the Moslem traditionists have an ineradicable tendency to transpose everything into their own mentality. Further, since a manuscript gives a kind of quasi definitiveness to the oral tradition, including all its errors, it becomes almost impossible to eliminate these errors because of the unquestioning respect usually accorded a written document.

*173 There are also the non-literate Moslem traditionists: ordinary dyeli who have been converted in the usual Sudanese fashion, as described in Chapter 6, and who have abandoned none [177] of the characteristics of their caste. They have merely added a few peculiarities due to Moslem influence.

In drawing on these sources, European publications add new reasons for doubt. Most especially, because of a desire -- legitimate, in principle -- to bring some sort of order out of the incoherent mass of traditions, but also because of a need to make them fit a personal theory, the European author takes refuge in an hypothesis. Now there is no objection to this, assuming that the hypothesis on which the author bases his theories is clearly stated. Too often, however, the hypothesis is so well concealed or even so intricately entwined in the tradition that it is impossible either to discover what it is or to set an exact limit to its range. This new metamorphosis of tradition is not the least dangerous for historical truth.

115 It is to two non-literate Moslem dyeli that I am indebted *173 for the traditions concerning the Ségou and Kaarta clans. My interpreter, Soulelman Goundiamou (1), whose services as a

1. Now chief of the village of Ambidédi (Gadiaga).

guide and informant on native matters were invaluable to me, gave

115 me the benefit of his experience in translating these tales. I
*173 hereby thank him most sincerely.

As far as Ségou is concerned, Karé Tammoura's story does not seriously modify the known general outline, but all the same it differs from earlier publications in its essentially native feeling, which I have tried to preserve. It is very interesting, for instance, to see how step-by-step [26] an empire developed out of a fla-n-ton': this change in a strictly native form of association is most instructive. It shows in detail how one of these Sudanese empires -- and not the least of them -- was organized. It is essential to know this if one is to understand the political history of this country. Community, brotherhood, clan, slavery, Islam -- all essential and too-little-known factors of Sudanese society -- are there to be seen, alive and just as they are.

In spite of its weaknesses and its lacunae, I am therefore giving, without change, the story told by the dyeli Karé Tammoura. This Ségou Bambara has occasionally allowed himself to cover the truth with a Moslem veil, because he is a convert; but it is easy to discern the facts under the poorly applied make-up.

115 My informant for Kaarta was principally the dyeli Gran Koaté, who was also a native of Ségou and a Moslem. He was for a long time attached to the person of Ahmadou, son of Omar, with whom he resided at Ségou and at Nioro, where he acted as a close confidant and was sometimes charged with important missions.

124 I feel obliged to point out that these two informants are not entirely responsible for the lacunae in their stories. I had had these two learned men brought from Ségou to Djenné, where I was commandant of the circle in 1902. In spite of my desire to learn as much as possible from them, I had to consider the demands of my post, which left me little leisure, and also had to avoid keeping them too long away from their homes. Hence, I was forced to cut short their long speeches. I do not think that I missed anything essential, but undoubtedly there was much to be gleaned from what had to be sacrificed for lack of time. I hope that one of my more fortunate successors may be able to fill in the lacunae in the stories set down here.

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[27] History of the Empire of Ségou
(As told by the dyeli Karé Tammoura)

Preliminaries

Origin of the Kouloubali or Ségou and Kaarta

A hunter coming from the east had a son named Barama Ngolo, who was born at Barama-n-dougou on the Bani; as he proceeded west, the same hunter had a second son, Nya Ngolo, who came into the world at Nya-Ngolo-la, a village in Kaminiadougou.

After their father's death, Barama Ngolo, Nya Ngolo and their brothers settled at Soumsan-na at the back of the Bani. One of the brothers having died there, Barama Ngolo accused Nya Ngolo of having caused the mishap and threatened to kill him. Thereupon Nya Ngolo fled to Massa-la, near Ségou, where he became shepherd of the flocks belonging to the Peul. His son Soumsan was with him.

Nya Ngolo died at Massa-la. When Barama Ngolo learned that the fugitives he sought were living there, he started out at once to capture them. On hearing this, Soumsan and his people went to Koumando, west of Ségou. Barama Ngolo proceeded to Dina, the headquarters of the canton to which Koumando belonged, to ask the chief to turn over the fugitives so that he could kill them. His request was refused, but, in order to preserve the peace, the people of Koumando forced Soumsan to leave the country.

The little band reached the bank of the Niger and, lacking a boat, were about to be caught by their implacable enemy. In desperation, Soumsan called upon his ancestors to come to his aid to save the lineage. His plea was answered: a poyon' suddenly emerged from the water and offered to ferry Soumsan and all his people across. That is why Soumsan vowed that the poyon' should henceforth be the tao of himself and all his descendants (1). [28]

1. Compare the following variant version, whose complete text also contains the legend of the poyon':

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"Long, long ago, very probably before the seventeenth century, two Banmana brothers, named Niangolo and Baramangolo respectively and no doubt representing a strayed unit of a large-scale migration, came to the right bank of the Baoulé south of Barouéli (near the confluence of the Baoulé and the Bagbé), in flight from enemies driving them toward the northwest" (Delafosse, Vol. 1, p. 285).

Barama Ngolo and His First Descendants

Having given up hope of catching up with the fugitives, Barama Ngolo settled near Ségou-koro at Fa, where his son Soma was born. The latter became a famous hunter and supported himself by the chase. In the course of his wanderings he often sought hospitality from a Somono marabout, alfa Sénou Kané, who urged him to settle nearby.

At that time there were many villages in the Ségou country inhabited by the Bambara and Soninké. The Soninké were the ones who were strong and rich at that period and their principal village, ruled by the Boaré family (1), was more or less the

1. This tradition agrees with that reported by Raffenel, in Vol. 1, p. 364.

headquarters of the region.

After he settled at Ségou, Soma married and had a son, fa Siné, who had three children: two boys, Mamari and Sérifbilé, and a daughter, Sana-ba. The daughter married Wara Dyara, chief of Dina, and since he was a powerful man, the alliance brought considerable renown to the family of fa Siné. Mamari accompanied his sister to Dina and there, thanks to his sister's complicity, he managed to learn the secret behind the prosperity and power of Wara Dyara. The secret was that the

*173 chief was served special food prepared according to rites known only to him. The basis of this food was goat's head, and the meal had to be eaten in complete darkness. Thus Mamari, admitted to the room by his sister, was able to share his brother-in-law's repast without being found out. It was because of this food that he was later to occupy the highest position in the country.

The fla-n-ton (2) of the People of Ségou and its Development

2. See Chapter 4, p. for the organization of the fla-n-ton'.

When he returned to Ségou-koro, Mamari lived mostly with his mother, whose favorite he was. For her he cultivated [263] [29] on the river bank the n-koyo, a kind of bitter pepper used in native cookery. He worked here virtually every day and, in the course of his labors, made the acquaintance of the water genie who taught him many magic practices which made him superior to other boys of his age. For these reasons, no less than for his unusual strength, they chose him leader of the ton' (ton-tigi).

The ton' members were young men of various races belonging to the villages of Doukounna, Si-do, Bignébongou, Sola, Banan-koroni, Ségou-Sikoro, Doua, etc. Mamari's mother, Sanou Saro, often made dlo (millet beer) or hydromel for her son's friends. In order to repay her kindness, which had gradually come to be habitual, the ton-den' [ton members] decided each to subscribe ten cowries to reimburse the good woman for the expenses incurred by the weekly drinking bout on Thursday. The assessment was known as di-songo, meaning, literally, "price of the honey," because of the purpose for which it was collected.

As time passed, the ton' became tyrannical toward its members. The frequent and large fines could be collected only by force and Mamari went so far as to put the recalcitrants

*173 in chains. Like the other members he himself suffered from this unfortunate development, and one day he was sentenced to a fine of 80 head of cattle for an infraction of the rules. He could not pay any such fine out of his own resources and in vain sought help from his father, who was no less poor than his son. In desperation he set off to see his sister at Dina. There his brother-in-law seemed to take an interest in the affair, listened patiently to the story and then advised him to return to Ségou where, he said, help would be forthcoming. Mamari then returned to Ségou, only to be followed shortly by his sister, with word that her husband had changed his mind and now advised him to refuse to pay. Outraged by this conduct, Mamari now found himself in a worse plight than ever. His sister understood his feelings and, without hesitating to make a sacrifice which she thought might save him, handed over all of her gold jewelry to be paid in place of the 80 head of cattle.

Mamari called the members together and gave them the jewels as a substitute for the cattle. However, on behalf of the [30] group, the dyala-tige Sibiri-ba Kouloubali, a native of the village of Doukounna, took the floor and said: "Our group was not organized for the purpose of acquiring treasure; we are gathered here to provide ourselves with the pleasures of living. The fines are not intended to enrich us but only to provide a communal stock of food. You were fined 80 head of cattle, and that is what we want. If you do not have them, go away and let us part."

Mamari crossed over to the left bank of the Niger to seek advice of Massa Taraoré at Dyané and to ask him to intervene. Massa Taraoré listened sympathetically and had him escorted to Doukounna to see the ton' arbitrator. The latter said: "In Mamari's ton' there are nobles from Doua against whom I am not competent to make a judgment; the settlement should be referred to the notables at Doua." The notables at Doua protested: "Since some of our own people are involved, our judgment might well be considered to be biased. So it would be better to call on someone who has no interest whatever in the affair, such as Tyéma Darko of Ségou-koro." When Tyéma was consulted he told Mamari: "Have patience, time settles everything."

*173 Mamari was unwilling to accept this advice; so in order to escape the hostility which he felt around him, he requested asylum from the Kouloubali of Binabougou, only to have them protest: "We are helpless people and, if we were to admit you among us, we should end by arousing the enmity of the powerful people of Doua. So stay where you are and we shall give all we can to help you."

Since he dared not return to Ségou-koro, Mamari went to Ségou-Sikoro where he hoped to win the support of the almami Ousman Dyiré. The latter did, in fact, intercede with the chief of Ségou-koro, who summoned the ton' members and told them: "Stop your quarreling, take back your leader and, in order to avoid a repetition of such dissension, limit your membership to people of the same class and separate yourselves from the nobles of Doua who are the cause of all the trouble." The young men agreed: "It is true that we are all farmers and that fines involving cattle are beyond our means; henceforth, all infractions of the rules will be payable in millet which we shall use to make dlo." Thereupon, Mamari resumed his office and the people of Doua were barred.

[31] From that time on, two rival groups lived side by side: the ton' of Doua, whose chief was Kassoum Boaré, the son of the chief of Doua, and Mamari's ton', comprising the people of Ségou-koro, Ségou-Sikoro, Doukounna, etc.

The young men's decision did not fail to alarm the heads of families. One of them, old Ménkoro Kouloubali, the father of the dyala-tige Sibiri-ba of Doukounna, sought out Mamari's father and said to him: "I see that our boys, who already do so little work for us, have now decided to waste our grain. Well, I warn you, the father of their chief, that if your son touches so much as a single grain of my harvest, I shall break his head." Fa Siné replied: "What can I do, since my son has never obeyed me? However, I shall tell him what you have said."

Fa Siné called in Mamari and, in the presence of the blacksmith Maliki, told him of old Ménkoro's visit and bitterly reproached him for leading such an irresponsible life. Mamari gathered his group together and, after telling them about his

*173 interview with his father, asked them to help him build a house where he could live independently. They set to work, and Mamari's house was soon built at Ségou-koro on the site of the future Biton-blon-da, the place where the ton' had been meeting up to that time. On Mondays and Thursdays, after a hunt to provide game, the members met there and had a feast. Each brought some sort of utensil and they prepared their own meals.

An old slave belonging to fa Siné, named bina (1) Bilali,

[576]

1. Bina, whose literal meaning is "uncle," is here used as a title of respect.

had been attracted by the fine food and asked to be taken in as a "slave of the ton' " (ton-dyon'). He was admitted on that basis and became a sort of general factotum. A Soninké slave followed his example and was likewise admitted and given the important role of trumpeter. Using a horn which he sounded three times, he called together the members of the ton' when ordered to do so by Mamari. He was called ton-masa, "master of the ton'," because his summons was not to be disobeyed on pain of [32] a fine of ten jugs of millet beer for recalcitrants.

A Somono slave named Allah-doungo (lit., Allah's pleasure) also offered his services to the ton', and the organization increasingly became the refuge of men seeking to evade any authority they deemed excessive.

These recruits were the first ton-dyon'; all were slaves in quest of freedom. Soon, however, the movement they had started was extended, thanks to the influence of the ton-tigi's diplomacy.

One day Mamari's mother gave (1) a free gift of twenty

[431]

1. It is entirely typical of native custom to give ostensibly free gifts in this way, when it is actually intended that the giver receive more than he gives. This is an example.

jugs of beer to the ton', and Mamari used the occasion to tell the

*173 members: "Sowing-time is at hand, and it would be a good thing if we were to cultivate for my mother and for Sibiri's mother." The ton-den' replied: "Since you ask us to work for Sibiri's mother too, we shall do so; if you had asked only for your own mother, we should have refused. We are not your slaves but are and intend to remain free men."

They worked for a fortnight in Mamari's mother's field and then for another fortnight in the field belonging to Sibiri's mother. Then, to express his gratitude, Sibiri's father, old Ménkoro, presented them with a wild ox and expressed a wish to join the ton'. Mamari slyly replied: "Ask my father." "Yes, yes, I know," said Ménkoro, "I was mistaken and I ask your pardon." He was accepted and brought with him Mya-Ngue Dembélé of Dina.

So it was that Mamari's ton' continued to acquire slaves; the slaves came in order to have an illusion of freedom, and the weak in order to have protection.

Rivalry between the fla-n-ton' of Ségou and Doua

The people of Doua could hardly fail to take umbrage at this prosperity, which was more and more a threat to [33] their domination. Therefore, Kassoum's ton' used all possible means to combat its rival, Mamari's ton'.

One day Kassoum and his followers sought out Mamari and insisted on an eventual reconciliation between the two groups. Mamari refused. Kassoum tried to stem the current of enmity and offered to take an oath as a guarantee of his good intentions. Mamari stopped him, however, saying: "No, let us not swear. In the first place, I can do nothing without the members of my ton' and, secondly, since you are strong and I am weak, an oath between us would have no meaning." Kassoum was insistent, [695] however; while they were talking, they came to a stone well and Kassoum pronounced the sacramental words, ate one half of a kola nut and let the other half fall to the bottom of the well. "That's all very well," said Mamari," but that only binds you.

*173 If you want to come back in a week, I shall gather my men and we'll try to come to an agreement." So they parted, agreeing to meet in a week to go hunting together.

Mamari summoned the ton-den' and told them what had taken place. After some discussion, it was agreed to accept the invitation of the ton' of Doua.

On the day set, Mamari and the 400 (1) members of his ton' arrived promptly at the rendezvous. The hunt took place near Togou and no incident marred the harmony between the young men. However, on the way back, when the party reached Bignébougou, where Kassoum lived, the latter insisted on having the hunters take refreshment at his house where, he said, everything was in readiness to receive them. Mamari protested that nothing of the sort had been agreed upon and that, on the contrary, everyone was free to do as he pleased. He and his ton-den' intended to return to their usual meeting-place, while Kassoum and his men could likewise dispose of their game as they wished. The quarrel became so heated that the village elders rushed up to intervene and reprimanded Kassoum. Then Mamari said to them: "Never mind, no one can take what is in my hand unless he cuts off my [34] wrist. Let the people of Doua keep their game. But if any one of us Ségou people gives up his share, let it be said that his mother slept with a dog. Kassoum came to us of his own volition to seek a reconciliation and we agreed to it in order merely to demonstrate our willingness to live in peace. The present quarrel shows just how much credit should be given to his good intentions."

Mamari set out, accompanied by his followers carrying their game. Kassoum, however, had different ideas. Furious at

1. It is impossible to assign even an approximate value to the numbers given by the traditionists since they cannot be checked. The matter of the fine of 80 head of cattle is another example.

*173 the failure of his stratagem, he was anxious to do what he could to mitigate his ill-advised action. He ordered his horse to be bridled at once but, being too impatient to restrain himself, he jumped onto the only half-prepared mount and dashed off to bar Mamari's way. The two men swore at each other, and it looked as if the affair was about to turn out tragically when Kassoum's brother rushed up. Indignant at his brother's conduct and fearing serious consequences from the quarrel, he knocked Kassoum from his horse and punished him severely.

Kassoum wept; Mamari and his followers departed. Summoned by his father, Kassoum had to explain his escapade. "I had only the best intentions," he said, "and indeed, hoping to consolidate our reconciliation with Mamari, I had had beer prepared which I intended to offer to the whole party." "That may be," said his father, "but you went about it in such a way as to put us in a very delicate position. It is my order that henceforth you are to keep out of trouble."

That evening Kassoum, accompanied by most of his followers, went to see Mamari. He apologized on the pretext of a misunderstanding and begged that a new hunt be organized to mark the end of all these regrettable incidents. "Very well," replied Mamari, "but let us agree in advance as to where we shall set up our kitchen on the return." "Your choice will be ours," said Kassoum.

The hunt took place in the vicinity of Doukounna. On the return trip, Mamari brought up the rear. When they reached Doukounna, the village of the dyala-tige Sibiri-ba, the latter tried to force Kassoum and his people to stop there to do their cooking. Kassoum refused and a quarrel began. Someone informed Mamari, who ran up and sternly rebuked [35] Sibiri, forcing him to give up the idea. For the moment all was calmed down and it even seemed as if the good-will on both sides might be sincere. The two ton' remained separated but maintained a certain amount of comradely contact.

These events did Mamari no harm, and the composure he had displayed, no less than his qualities as an adroit politician, constantly brought new members into the ton'. So it was that the people of Banan-koroni, who had reason to complain of the people of Doua, prevailed upon old Mênkoro to propose them as proteges of the ton'. However, Mamari was not willing to put

*173 himself into the position of being in open conflict with the people of Doua, since he felt that he was not yet ready. So he simply sent back the following answer: "Let anyone at Banan-koroni who desires to join the ton' present himself, and the members will decide." Six men from Banan-koroni were admitted under the sponsorship of Ménkoro.

When winter was approaching, Kassoum asked that a field be cultivated for him. Mamari persuaded his ton' to cultivate a field for his mother and for fodder for his own horse, a second field for Kassoum, and a third for Sibiri, the dyala-tige.

Old fa Séri, on learning of this decision, said to the other elders: "Our young men, who do nothing for us, who obey us only when they feel like it and who help themselves from our granaries to provide their beer, are now going to spend their time working on fields from which we'll not get a single grain. Don't you think we'd better put an end to this state of affairs?" An old marabout interrupted: "The boys are entitled to use their two free days, Monday and Thursday, to do whatever they want." This opinion was heeded and the young men were left in peace.

The harvest was very abundant and Mamari, particularly, had a great deal of millet. He divided it into two equal piles and, having called his father, said to him: "Here is the result of my companions' labor, and I am giving half to you. However, it must not be forgotten that those who have provided our food are not our slaves but rather, free men, [36] to whom we must show gratitude and generosity. Therefore, from this day forward, you will send to the ton' 10 gourds of couscous and 20 jugs of beer. Have no fear that you will lack for food. I need only give the order and every granary and every field will be pillaged."

The old man departed, delighted to have a son who paid such deference to his old age. However, either because of an excess of joy or for some other reason, he died soon after, and Mamari congratulated himself on having escaped his father's curse (1).

[172]

1. He built a house in the Djenné style at Ségou-koro, of which I have seen the last remaining vestige.

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[172]

consisting of a rectangular pillar
worn away by the rains.

[765] According to custom, the members of the ton' settled down in front of the deceased's house for a week, singing, dancing and generally carousing in the usual way.

When this traditional period was over, Mamari asked them to enclose his father's and his mother's houses within a single wall. They set to work and built a wall with only one door, [622] over which they placed the pyramidal ornaments used only for chiefs' doorways. Within the enclosure they left the existing division in two parts, and it was henceforth understood that the part formerly occupied by Mamari's father would be reserved for people from Doukouma when they wished to stay in Ségou.

Kassoum was determined to show that he had been properly brought up and knew how to return courtesy; so, one day, he invited Mamari to a drinking party, planned especially in his honor. Mamari accepted and, on arriving, found that Kassoum, from impatience no doubt, had started the celebration so far ahead that he was already dead drunk.

[273] According to the usual custom, Mamari ordered one of the ton-den', as it was his duty, to taste the dio first (2). Lacking

2. A precautionary measure to guard against poison.

a utensil in which to pour a small quantity of the beer, the taster sipped from the crock itself. Kassoum jumped up in a fury, crying out that the ton-den' was a disgusting person, and [37] broke a gourd full of beer over the fellow's head. In turn, Mamari became angry at Kassoum, whose manners struck him as coarse and intolerable. Then, after much invective on both sides, Mamari left the place to return home. Kassoum took up his bow and arrows and set out after Mamari. However, since he was slowed down by his drunkenness, he could not go far and his arrows missed their mark. Mamari returned to Ségou and, for the first time, installed himself in his father's house.

*173 Once his drunken fumes had dissipated, Kassoum was seized with remorse and sent his friends to apologize to Mamari. As that move failed, he fined himself 100 jugs of beer and swore that he would prevail upon Mamari and his ton-den' to come and drink with them. However, all his advances were received with a categorical refusal: "The first arrow has been shot and all is over between us," said Mamari. Then Kassoum decided to resort to intimidation and force. He set forth, followed by a band armed with arrows and spears, to surprise Mamari, but found the latter's house abandoned.

Meanwhile, Mamari had been forewarned and had had the trumpet sounded to summon his ton-den'. He told them what had happened and his actions were approved. Kassoum, who had had to return home after six days of waiting and maneuvering, was put into chains by his father, who was furious at his behavior. Kassoum nourished an implacable hatred toward Mamari, and that is why, when winter came, he and his followers went to Si-do, near Ségou; they settled down there and did everything in their power to prevent Mamari and his people from cultivating their fields. This was a waste of time, however, since the young men did all the work at night. This state of affairs persisted for a year.

Then Mamari once more appealed to his sister. He went to Dina in order to bring back some help. Just at the time he arrived, his brother-in-law died and he was forced to prolong his stay without getting more than promises. After three months' absence, he returned to Ségou and called together the ton-den' to tell them of his efforts. On their side, they told him that the situation was no longer endurable: the impossibility of [38] getting the field work done was reducing them to poverty. After careful consideration, it was decided to appeal to the people of Doukouma and Banan-koroni to intervene with Kassoum and persuade him to put an end to hostilities. However, Kassoum held to his claims and Mamari continued to refuse to comply.

At this point, under cover of a dark night, Mamari and his men went to Si-do, destroyed the stockading erected by Kassoum's followers and carried off the wood to their ton'. The

*173 next day Kassoum and his party returned in broad daylight to reclaim the wood and destroy the buildings belonging to Mamari's ton'. This resulted in a fight, during which one of Mamari's followers killed a man in Kassoum's party. The latter retreated with his people, carrying off the body of their companion.

Kassoum's father now recognized the gravity of a situation which he had so far regarded as childish horseplay and, to avenge the murder of one of his subjects, swore to kill Mamari and ten notables of Ségou, Doukounna and Banan-koroni. He at once sent an order to the ton-den' to turn over Mamari and the murderer to him. "Never," replied the young men, "will any of us agree to arrest one of our comrades. We shall never hand over Mamari, either. Let the chief of Doua come and get them."

At this very moment, Mamari's sister, Sana-ba, arrived at Ségou. According to custom, the eldest son of her late husband was bringing her back to her family in order to obtain permission to marry her. She was escorted by 300 armed men, who were supplied with two pirogues filled with arrows and an ample quantity of spears. Mamari prevailed upon Sana-ba to persuade her escort to enter the ton', along with the Bambara chiefs from the left bank of the Niger who had come to Ségou to pay their respects to the widow of the powerful chief of Dina.

With all this support, Mamari now felt competent to deal with the people of Doua. For this purpose he built stockadings between Fa and Si-do; a month later he was attacked by the people of Doua, but he easily repulsed them and took the offensive. The enemy was dislodged successively from Doua and Bignébougou, where Kassoum was killed, and from Togou, where Damfé was killed. The vanquished took refuge with Mamadi Boaré at Kirango, where they were besieged by Mamari's ton-den'.

[39] The Koulouballi

(1680-1736)

Mamari, called Biton, and his Descendants (Biton-si-ton)

Mamari, called Biton (1) (1680-1710). As his power

1. The name Mamari, among the

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551

1. The name Mamari, among the Bambara, is the equivalent of Mohammed. It is a common given name, even among pagans; the dyeli Karé Tammoura, perhaps because of his own conversion to Islam, used the name Mamari more often than the more common Biton. The cognomen Biton, is a hybrid adopted by the Peul as an equivalent for ton-dan'. The same personage was formerly called fa Tigi-ton', which also indicates Peul influence and which is, on occasion, shortened to fa Tigi, rendered by some who misheard the original as fo Tige and also fo Tinye.

[177]

*173 increased over his people, Mamari felt the stirrings of ambition grow. The defeat and rout of the people of Doua gave a definite orientation to his projects for domination. However, there was one thing he needed to carry out his plans: an army completely under his control.

As a start toward carrying out his designs, he sent a message to the people of Doukouma and Banan-koroni, his oldest and most faithful allies, with a request that they send their elders to him on a permanent basis to form a council which he would consult on all appropriate occasions. The elders agreed to remain with him during the dry season, but they insisted on returning home in the winter to look after their own affairs and those of their people.

While these negotiations were proceeding, the young men of Doukouma and Banan-koroni were fighting around Kirango on Mamari's behalf. When the latter could not overcome the elders' resistance, he resolved to use force (2). He caused a deep well

2. With the assistance of his new partisans, the people of Dina and those from the left bank of the Niger.

*173 to be dug in the courtyard of his house and then summoned the recalcitrant elders, ostensibly for consultation on urgent matters. When they had arrived, Mamari told them that he wished to interview them two by two in order better to know their opinion concerning the questions under consideration. The elders refused. Then, at a sign from Mamari, [40] men who had been posted at hand for the purpose hurled themselves upon the elders, massacred them and threw their corpses into the well, which was then sealed up. It is said that there were 740 elders and also that, since that time, people from Doukounna and Banan-koroni who reach Ségou in the evening never spend the night there.

Now deprived of their rightful leaders, the people of Doukounna and Banan-koroni were henceforth at the mercy of Mamari. He recalled the column from Kirango and, as soon as it had arrived, he summoned the young men of Doukounna and Banan-koroni. Without giving them any explanation, he ordered them to wear their hair in the fashion of the ton-dyon', i.e., to have their hair shaved off except for two locks at the forehead and another at the nape of the neck. The young men protested that they were free men, but Mamari told them: "Your elders are buried here because they persisted in acting like free men, and there are now only women and slaves in your villages." When they were told what had happened in their absence, the young men realized that any resistance was out of the question; so they submitted and went to swell the numbers of the ton-dyon'.

[309 567]

This bold act gave Mamari a permanent army and he was so well aware of the extent of his success that his pride was already openly displayed. "The Dyémé-ka-dougou," he said, "extends from the Mindaka watercourse to that of Sitadougou. On the other bank of the Mindaka, the country belongs to the people of Doua. Let it be well understood that you are either on their side or on mine. We shall no longer eat groundnuts in the ton' together, nor drink our rounds of ton' millet beer. I am the son of Allah and henceforth shall drink only a king's beer in a royal cup. Let those who want to drink with me remain, and all others depart. From now on, the only free men are Nyé Tyétigi of Banan-koroni and Mansa of Banamba. All the rest are my slaves. Therefore, let each village send me 100 men to make up my personal guard."

*173 All of these confusing events, however, did not fail to arouse resistance. The people of Doukounna and Banan-koroni, though unable to fight openly, nevertheless sought to avenge themselves upon Mamari. For this purpose they made common cause with the people of Doua. A man from Doukounna, along [804] with one from Doua who carried [41] 300 gros [gros = 1/8 oz.] of gold, went to Kong to seek an army to fight against Mamari. The people of Kong (1) agreed and provided a well-organized

1. Native traditions tend to center around great empires, capitals or paramount chiefs.

I have indicated that the origin of the Kouloubali, who founded the empire of Ségou, is connected with ancestors said by some traditionists to have come from Mandé and by others to be descended from a hunter from the east (see p. 30).

These two contrasting traditions reappear in connection with the siege of Ségou. The version given in this tale is also found in the Notice historique du Royaume et du Cercle de Ségou [Historical Note on the Kingdom and Circle of Ségou] and in Autour de Kita [Around Kita], p. 38. At this period Kong had an extensive sphere of influence, and M. Binger has shown how, by entirely commercial and peaceful means, it managed to acquire far-flung authority. Therefore, this version of a Kong army coming to attack Ségou and, on being defeated, retreating to the west and occupying Banan and then Mandé, seems suspect, because it is out of character with the practices of the Dioula [Diula] of Kong.

*173

Monsieur Delafosse, who thinks the story improbable, has a different explanation, based on traditions concerning the other center, Mandé.

force, which laid siege to Ségou. However, when the assailants failed to take Ségou, they gave up their plan and, heading east, captured Bala. Encouraged by this success, they returned to Ségou, which they besieged for nine months until Mamari's fall seemed imminent. But at that point the chief of Dina managed to break through under cover of darkness and to bring in provision. Thanks to this help, Mamari successfully attempted a sortie. The Kong forces were taken by surprise and cut to pieces. They abandoned a large number of rifles of the blunderbuss type, the first firearms ever seen in the region.

As a result of this event which, instead of lessening Mamari's prestige, actually consolidated his authority, he asked the chief of Dina to leave behind his armed force as a permanent arrangement. However, the chief refused, saying: "My men may remain here during the dry season, but they must return home in the winter to till the fields." Mamari was not satisfied and he maneuvered to such good effect that when the chief started home with his men, the latter abandoned him one by one. Enticed by Mamari's promises, all returned to enter his service and submit to him as ton-dyon'. The chief of Dina was very angry and bitterly reproached Sana-ba for her brother's conduct; indeed, their insults went so far that there was no possibility of [42] a reconciliation. As a result, Sana-ba fled, taking with her 400 men whom she left at Kégné while she herself proceeded to Ségou.

After having thus subdued a possibly troublesome ally, and having no further anxiety with regard to the Kong people, Mamari resumed his struggle against Kirango. He dispatched his son Ba-dyi to besiege the village, but the son was defeated and killed. Mamari vowed that his vengeance would be terrible and that nothing would avert the evil fate planned for his hitherto invincible enemies. Yet for the moment his threats remained empty, for he agreed with his followers that it would be very dangerous to seek to conquer at any price.

*173 In order to occupy his time, he undertook a preliminary organization of his domain. So as to preclude any surprise from the direction of Dina, he put his slave Mari, with 1,000 men, in charge at Tyi-la-bougou, opposite Niamina.

At that time, the Peul, who were centered near Ségou, were under the authority of one of their own people, named Dotyé Bari, himself a vassal of Mamari. One day Dotyé learned of the arrival of a large company of migrants from Bani-n-ko under the command of a certain Dyoba Fonba. Dotyé sent word to Mamari, who told him to keep an eye on the newcomers. However, Dyoba soon complained of Dotyé and demanded to be put under the authority of the chief, Tyéma Mamari. Mamari refused, and Tyéma, impressed by this show of defiance, left his village to come to Ségou, where he settled at Tyéma-bougou.

Dotyé had died in the meantime, and Mamari sent for Dyoba and set him up in the deceased's place. He summoned the dead man's son Bougari, under pretext of establishing the boy near him; actually, he required Bougari to furnish him a force of 1,000 men. These he considered as his own slaves and belonging to his mother, Sounou Saro; they were put in charge of Nankoroba Nzangué Dyallo.

Further, he sent his son Bakari -- a younger brother of Badyi -- to Djenné to be educated in the Moslem religion. Still another son, Dé-koro, was established at Ségou-bougou at the head of 6,000 Samaké, who had come from Ténéton. To this contingent, Mamari added another 12,000 men commanded by Kanou-ba-nyouma.

[43] He finally decided that the moment had come to march on Kirango. The expedition was completely successful. Chief Mamadi Boaré was killed and 16,000 captives fell into the hands of the victor, who distributed them among the chiefs who had aided him. One of these, Ngolo Ké-ba, received 1,000 men, while four groups of 400 men each, under the over-all command of fa Sira Taraoré, were forced to work in the fields at Farako. The old man, Ton-massa, received as his share 9,000 men and he settled at Kohin, south of Ségou-bougou, while a certain fa Sira took possession of Ségou with a following of 400 persons. Finally, the young sofa were put under the orders of

*173 Dyoni Kolé, that is, a man named Kolé who came from Dioni.

Mamari himself had no fixed residence and his presence in a vicinity was always a source of anxiety for any who might cause him displeasure. It is said that one day he told the almami Ousman, who was somewhat a friend of his: "I intend to establish my home at Ségou-Sikoro." "Fine! (1)" said the

[95]

1. This expression "a nyana" is an evasive answer, often used to hide hostility. See many examples in Chap. 7 following.

almami, who was ready to leave when Mamari shortly afterward added: "On second thought, I'd rather build a 'New-Ségou' (Ségou-koura)." "Fine!" repeated the almami Ousman. However, Mamari again changed his mind and summoned the almami Ousman Dyiré in order to hand over to him the responsibility for affairs at Ségou-Sikoro. Since the old Moslem had no wish to get too intimately involved with his turbulent neighbor, he declined the honor and invented an excuse for a trip to Togou.

Around this time, the Somono Tyéro people, migrating from the Bobo country, arrived at Ségou and obtained permission to remain there. Soon after, the people of Kong, who had recovered from their defeat, appeared on the frontiers of the Ségou country. Since they were warlike and well armed, they were redoubtable adversaries and indeed they very nearly routed Mamari. It is said that in the decisive battle Mamari owed his victory solely to the Somono Tyéro people who routed the Kong forces by causing a swarm of bees to attack them.

[44] Old Ton-massa died during this engagement, and Mamari felt the loss all the more keenly because the soothsayers he had consulted predicted that his own run of good fortune would vanish with the old man. However, he arranged for a replacement for the deceased old man and gave his duties to a slave whom he bought from the Somono people at Néré-koro.

In that same year he modified the tax which had been required of his followers and proclaimed that in future instead of the di-songo, they would only have to give him the grain which

*173 remained in the dust at harvest-time. This levy was called the nyon' dyu.

At about the same time he acquired two new slaves who were destined to play an important role in the country: one is still known as Nzan Fato and the other was Ngolo Dyara. The first was enslaved for stealing a beehive. Here is the story of the second:

Ngolo Dyara was born in the village of Nyouanna (1),

1. "Niola, near Bogué, across from Niamina" (Delafosse, Vol. 2, p. 227).

which paid an annual tribute of millet to Mamari. Now, when Ngolo's father died, his uncle Ménkoro had to go to Ségou to make the payment because of the child's extreme youth and, under the pretext of initiating the boy into the proceedings, he took the child with him. As was his usual custom, Ménkoro stayed at the home of Danté Balo, the wife of a blacksmith who was a client of Mamari. Then, also according to his usual habit, he visited all of the dives and gambling-houses, where he managed to lose 130 of the 160 loads of millet intended for tribute. Thereupon, he sought out his hostess and told her that during the night some "young men" had robbed him, and he bemoaned the reception he was likely to get from Biton. The good woman allowed herself to be fooled and agreed to appease the master's wrath by offering Ngolo Dyara as substitute for the missing tribute.

When Mamari heard that the payment from Nyouanna was insufficient, he fell into a towering rage and, to punish this lapse, which occurred every year, he swore to sacrifice Ménkoro to his idols. But Danté Balo intervened and, by clever maneuvres, persuaded Mamari to change his mind and, for this time, to accept [45] young Ngolo Dyara as the balance of the payment. Mamari received the child as a hostage and gave Ménkoro 20 days to buy him back for 300 loads of millet. If the time ran out without any payment from Ménkoro, the child would belong to Mamari. This arrangement was agreed to, and Mamari ordered his blacksmith, Sdir-bilé, to proclaim the terms clearly so that, if the occasion should arise, no one could criticize him for enslaving a free man. Thereupon, Ménkoro went home alone.

*173 Mamari was soon charmed by the wide-awake countenance and quick intelligence of Ngolo and made him a boon companion and sharer of all his secrets. He gave him the key to the room where his idols were kept and taught him the rituals of their cult. He presented him to his wives, dressed him in red (1) and, in

[822]

1. Scarlet is a favorite color among the Sudanese. The tale here recounted shows three examples of this fact: the foregoing about Ngolo, another about Tonmassa, and still another about Deni-ba Bo. The last two examples would seem to indicate that red was especially reserved for chiefs. A similar conclusion is to be reached from analogous facts at Malli set forth by Ibn Batouta.

short, treated him as the most cherished of favorites.

A year passed before the people of Nyouanma put in an appearance; Mamari asked them if they wanted to claim the child. "No," they said, "for not only has the time-limit passed, but also we still have not the means to pay the tax agreed; when he accepted your proposal, Ménkoro knew perfectly well that he could never carry it out. Besides, the child has by now acquired habits from living among you which would make it unbearable for him to live with us." Mamari ordered the blacksmith to inform everyone of these statements so that it would be well known that Ngolo Dyara was now his slave both in fact and by law.

By dint of living so intimately with his master, Ngolo soon learned all Mamari's secrets. He knew, for instance, that on certain days Mamari bathed in water which had the virtue of strengthening and increasing his authority. It occurred to him that he could no doubt acquire a bit of this power if he bathed in the magic water. So every time the master took a bath, the child stood beneath the gutter that carried the water outside so as to share the wonderful effects of this magic practice. [46] But Mamari had noticed traces of footprints beneath the gutter on

*173 several occasions and suspected the truth; so he used a trick. He pretended to take a bath and, while the water was running out, looked outside. He saw the child beneath the gutter and struck him with his iron-tipped stick.

Ngolo was terrified and ran off to tell his story to Dantê Balo. The good woman interceded with Mamari and persuaded him to relent. Nevertheless, Mamari decided to separate from his favorite and summoned Kolé, the leader of the sofa, to whom he entrusted the child, saying: "Here's a bad boy; don't be afraid to make him work hard."

One day, when he had taken the bila-koro (1) in his

[56] 291

1. A young boy old enough to be circumcised and wearing a piece of cloth called bila between his legs, instead of trousers.

charge to the field to cut fodder, Kolé sat down in a place called Sirani-n-tu (lit., forest of the little baobab tree) after the small baobab tree which grew there in the middle of a grove. The spirit of the place, who lived in the baobab tree, appeared to Kolé and said: "If you come tomorrow to this same spot and if you bring me a white ram, a white rooster and some rice, I will make it possible for you to become king of Ségou." Now Ngolo, who was wandering about nearby, had seen and heard everything. When he returned to Ségou he ran weeping to Dantê Balo; when she asked what was the matter, he answered that a spirit had threatened to kill him unless he sacrificed a white ram, a white rooster and some rice. "Ah well," she said, "Cheer up, here's a white rooster and some rice, and you can take the ram from the master's flock. If anyone is surprised at seeing you with a ram, just say that I gave it to you." He followed her advice and arrived on time at the rendezvous, which Kolé, on the other hand, had forgotten.

After killing the rooster and the ram, in accordance with the rites with which he was familiar, and offering the rice, Ngolo saw the genie appear, while a distant voice said: "Ah, it's you, friend Kolé (2), I'm glad to see you obey my orders and, in return,

2. It is interesting to note that the genie

*173

mistakes the identity of the person honoring him and takes him for Kolé. This is a fact worth noting because it often occurs. Do the native tales use this means of expressing some sort of inferiority? If so, what sort of inferiority?

I promise that you will be supreme ruler of Ségou on the sole condition that [47] you bring me the same offerings at the same time every year." Such was the pact which made Ngolo's fortune.

The next day a young sofa, to whom Kolé had confided his adventure, asked him if he had fulfilled the wishes of the genie of Sirani-n-tu. The absent-minded Kolé at once set out and, when he had completed the sacrifice, the genie, astonished at being disturbed, asked what he wanted. On learning that this was the real Kolé, the spirit told him that he had been outwitted by a cleverer person, who had been entrusted with the secret of success. However, to reward him for his effort, the genie promised Kolé great wealth and an exalted position if every year at the same time he would come and make the same offering.

Kolé left in a rage. Certain that only one of the young sofa could have overheard the secret and made use of it, he summoned all the bila-koro and threatened to give each of them 100 lashes unless they denounced the one who had dared to impersonate him. Ngolo was accused, but he denied the charge emphatically. Yet when Kolé required him to swear by the well, he refused. So Kolé went to Mamari and told him that Ngolo's conduct was absolutely intolerable and that it was becoming impossible to keep him. Mamari insisted, in vain, on having some exact details and finally ordered Kolé to assign Ngolo to the group of sofa whose special duty was to care for the horses, until such time as it would be possible to get rid of him.

An opportunity soon arose when Mamari was sending a caravan of 240 slaves to Djenné to be exchanged for horses. The marabout of Djenné, who housed the caravan, demanded a slave of his own choosing in payment for his hospitality. Charmed by Ngolo's intelligence and youth, the marabout's choice fell on him. This new master treated Ngolo well, but forced him to

*173 embrace Islam. Ngolo made rapid progress and soon knew half the Koran by heart; at this point, having made a plan, he one day presented himself in tears to his master, the marabout. The latter kindly inquired the cause of his distress, and Ngolo told him that, though born free, he had been given in pawn to Mamari. He further said that he had just heard his parents had arrived at Ségou to ransom him and that, not knowing where to find him, they would certainly leave for good, and henceforth [48] he would have to remain a slave. The marabout told him: "Since you now know most of the Koran by heart and can practice our religion properly, you are no longer a slave. I give you your freedom; return to your country whenever you like."

Ngolo set out at once for Ségou, where he received hospitality from a marabout to whom he recounted his story of wandering, concluding with the information that his master at Djenné, of his own accord, had set him free as a reward for his zeal and assiduity in practicing the Moslem religion. Ngolo begged his host to intercede with Mamari for his pardon. The marabout gave him an amulet and told him to mingle with the young men guarding Mamari's door, so as to have every chance of getting near the master who, under the influence of the charm, would readily pardon him.

Ngolo followed this advice. Very early one morning he went to the vicinity of Mamari's house and, having concealed himself among the women working about the place, he was able to stretch out among the guards without attracting attention. He was pretending to be asleep when the master left his hut, recognized him, struck him with his iron-shod stick, and asked what he was doing there. Once more he recounted his adventure in its most favorable light and, with the marabout's amulet clutched in his hand, implored Mamari's pardon.

Mamari summoned Kolé and turned Ngolo over to him. Very soon, Ngolo sowed discord among the young men. Two factions were formed: on the one side, Kolé's partisans, and on the other, Ngolo's. Each day fights broke out at the slightest pretext. Kolé was at his wit's end and went to seek Mamari, saying: "It's impossible to keep Ngolo, for he is undermining my authority by his intrigues." "Be patient, as I am," replied Mamari," and I shall do for him so thoroughly that he'll never return."

*173 When Sidi El Mokhtar (1) arrived on a courtesy visit to

1. Sheik Sidi El Mokhtar was born around 1730 and died around 1811. There is therefore an error in the story -- an occurrence too frequent in native traditions to be worthy of emphasis.

Mamari, the latter, out of politeness, gave Ngolo to him [49] by way of a favor. Sheik Sidi El Mokhtar soon saw through Ngolo and was well aware that he would get no profit from the boy. So he told him: "You are destined for the highest places and your sons will rule Ségou. I leave you free to pursue your destiny; in return, however, I demand that you pledge yourself, as of today, to pay me a reward as soon as you occupy your predestined place." Ngolo refused to undertake any obligation and Sheik Sidi El Mokhtar, unable to overcome his resistance, let him depart all the same.

When he reached Ségou, Ngolo took refuge in the home of the Somono, Baré Tyéro, who took him to almami Ousman. The latter turned him over to Mamadou Kané, who presented him to Mamari. Mamari welcomed Ngolo as one welcomes one's fate. Again he sent for Kolé, but the latter was unwilling to cope with Ngolo and suggested a way to get rid of him. It happened that the post of tax-collector at Ségou-Sikoro had been vacant for some time; like his predecessors, the last incumbent had died of poison, and no one was anxious to take on the job. The irrepressible Ngolo would hardly fail to come to a prompt end in this dangerous post.

Contrary to expectations, however, Ngolo turned out to be a very able politician; not only did he have no trouble with the taxpayers, but he acquired many sincere partisans with the result that, at the time he married the wife who was to bear his son Boubou-dyé, there were more than a thousand people living under his authority.

Mamari had heard of a very learned marabout, named Karamoko Abdoullahi Diari, who lived at Niamina and he resolved to send for him. Kolé advised him to entrust the delicate

*173 mission to Ngolo on the theory that the impetuous and violent young man could hardly fail to anger the old man, who would shortly do away with him by means of the occult practices known to marabouts. From the beginning, however, the old man realized that this was a man destined to accomplish great things; so he welcomed him kindly, gave him amulets and made him promise to follow his advice most exactly. Ngolo asked him to use his influence to effect a reconciliation with Mamari. So the old man warned Mamari that he could expect good fortune only if he lived in constant association with Ngolo, who "had luck."

[50] From that day forward, Mamari had Ngolo about his person. He added a thousand men to those already following Ngolo and, so that the latter could support his followers suitably, he gave him cattle and sheep. He had Ngolo live at Ségou-koro, and although the young man kept the name Sikoro Ngolo, he was [173] also given the title of dyenfa, meaning high priest of his idols. Of these, the two most important were ba Kango-ba and na Ngolo-ko, which he had brought from Kaminiadougou.

Further, the old marabout of Niamina told Ngolo of a young girl in the village of Diaba destined to bear children who would have a brilliant future. On the basis of the learned man's advice, Ngolo asked the girl's hand in marriage; but she was an only child and her parents were no more anxious to lose her than she was to leave them. Mamari intervened, and upon his order the girl was handed over to Ngolo, while her grieving parents were recompensed with a gift of ten slaves.

In any case, Mamari's prudent friendship for Ngolo by no means blinded him to his own interests. He extended his influence less by warlike means than by very clever diplomacy. When he had settled in the Ségou area, the country between Dina and Kirango had about 40 cantons which were independent of each other. He was skillful enough to impose himself gradually as overlord by making use of the dissensions which divided them. By means of adroit diplomacy and an occasional successful campaign, he managed to gain control of the whole area.

In order to eliminate the barriers which tribes or families stubbornly maintained between one another, he moved whole groups of populations from place to place. Or he would establish

*173 troops or allies in large numbers at points where loyalty seemed doubtful. So it was that he put the faithful Kolé in charge of 6,000 men and gave command over 8,000 to his dependent, Allah-n-siré. These two chiefs were likewise at the service of his favorite wife, the mother of his head son Ba-dyi. In the same way, Tyé-kouma took up a position at Nango with 6,000 men, while another force of the same size and under the command of Ngolo Ké-ba occupied Sama in order to prevent an attack by the Kouloubali of Mémana [51] and Sori-bougou. Mamari himself settled at Massala, opposite Sama, for the same purpose. Bani-n-ko was held in check by 9,000 people camped at Gassi and under the command of Kafa-dyougou.

In the direction of Dina, fears which, at a given moment, had been very real, were now at an end. On the death of the chief, his 70 sons were unable to agree, and the slaves, finding no master among them, offered themselves to Mamari. He divided them into three groups: a group of 6,000 men settled at Foni under the command of Si-dioki entrusted with the mission of keeping watch over Bo-dyan, chief of Simo-na; a second group numbering 4,000 men was under the leadership of Fané and stationed at Massala to guard against hostile action from Konka-dougou; and a third group numbering 3,000 went to Guén-ni, in the Kala area near Ségou, to oppose a possible invasion attempt by Nyarankan, chief of Diani.

To the east, the frontier required careful watching. The Doua people had more or less reoccupied Kirango and were once more a threat. A column directed toward Togou and commanded by Allah-n-siré was repulsed and Allah-n-siré himself was killed, but when Ngolo was sent out to retrieve the loss, he came out the victor. As a reward, Mamari put him in command of his personal guard of more than 3,000 young warriors. Thereafter, Ngolo was constantly on duty in the room adjoining Mamari's.

A certain Kelli-Kelli Dinké had quarreled with his brothers and asked Mamari to intervene by force of arms in the dispute. Mamari agreed to go himself, then yielded to the ton-masa's request to take his place. The ton-masa was roundly defeated and Mamari was about to go himself when his son Dé-koro insisted on being given the responsibility. When Dé-koro reached

*173 the scene, he grossly insulted the ton-masa, calling him a coward and an incompetent, and had him given 40 lashes in front of the troops. Then Dé-koro took the village and killed the chief.

On his return, the ton-masa complained bitterly to Mamari of the shameful treatment accorded him and he made no secret of his hatred for Dé-koro. On the advice of a friend named Dyon-kolo, Mamari commiserated with the ton-masa and assured him that in the future no one [52] would fail to show him the respect due him. In token of his regard and esteem, he gave [804] him 150 coudees [a measure of ca. 50 centimeters] of silk to make a bila and a belt such as were worn by the sofa; the ton-masa alone had this regalia. Finally, in order to obviate any possible discord between the ton-masa and Dé-koro, Mamari acceded to the ton-masa's request to be placed in the service of son Bakari, who was pursuing his Islamic studies at Djenné.

Soon after this serious event, Mamari died (1).

1. His dominion extended on both banks of the Niger from Dina to Timbuktu.

"Around 1670, Er Rachid, the first filalien or hassanide sultan of Fez, in the course of an expedition into the Sous, besieged the mosque of a Moslem religious officiant named Ali ben Haidara, who fled to the Sudan and took refuge with the Banmana emperor Biton Kouloubali, whose authority was beginning to extend as far as Timbuktu. Ali offered Biton beautiful women captives of Spanish or Portuguese origin whom he had brought with him. The Banmana prince was so taken with this gift that he permitted Ali to settle at Timbuktu with his family and pupils and promised him protection. Indeed, when the sultan, Er Rachid, in hot pursuit of Ali, encountered the Ségou army between Timbuktu and Djenné in the northern part of Massina, he met with

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flat refusal on the part of Biton to turn over the fugitive. So the sultan returned to Morocco." (Delafosse, Vol. 1, p. 247). "Biton died of tetanus, after having wounded his foot accidentally on a sharp piece of iron." (Delafosse, Vol. 2, p. 286.)

Everyone who had any connection with the late leader brought or sent a contribution toward the funeral ceremonies. There were enough cowries to fill six warehouses, and Dé-koro decided to keep for himself their distribution to help the needy. The ton-masa opposed this view and wanted to have the treasure distributed among the poor at once. This disagreement, basically due to the enmity between the two men, might well have degenerated into active hostility, had Bakari's arrival not offered a diversion.

Bakari summoned all the slaves and in their presence picked up a marvelous piece of material, which had been given him by the marabouts of Djenné, and cast it into the air. It hung miraculously suspended over Bakari and his brother Dé-koro, who was seated beside him. Then the ton-masa tied a band of cloth around his own neck, humbly handed the ends to Bakari and said: "By the will of our master, I am and shall remain your slave."

On the fortieth day, Bakari was named chief. He settled [53] at Ségou-koro, while his brother Dé-koro withdrew to Ségou-bougou.

Bakari (1710) (1). Bakari's first act was to seek all those

1. Dr. Quintin and M. Delafosse consider that Biton's immediate successor was Dé-koro and that Ali or Bakari was only an unimportant intermediary between Dé-koro and Ton-Massa.

who had contributed nothing to his father's funeral. Among these were the people of Kingo under Mamari-ntyéni, Boaré,

*173 and Bakari decided to attack them. The ton-masa intervened, saying: "They are poor and they have not yet recovered from the disasters inflicted on them by your father. I am sure that it was due to no lack of good-will that they failed to fulfill their tributary obligations. In any event, it would be better to hear them before taking action against them." Bakari agreed and called upon Mamari-ntyéni for an explanation. Mamari-ntyéni refused to appear and sent the following reply: "I could not send cowries because neither I nor my people have any. Besides, why harry me for cowries I failed to send when you cannot agree what to do with those you have?"

This impertinence exasperated Bakari and he set out at the head of a large force to attack Kirango. However, by the time he had reached Dyam-bourou-bougou, his anger had subsided and he sent envoys to Mamari-ntyéni to invite him, once again, to make profession of loyalty. Mamari-ntyéni refused and swore that if Bakari continued to march on Kirango, he would cleave his skull from forehead to neck. Ignoring these threats, Bakari laid siege to the village and surrounded it for three months. Then, with winter at hand, the slaves murmured: "We've spent the whole dry season here and have obtained no decisive result in spite of our efforts. The winter season won't be any better -- in fact, worse -- and our fields will be producing nothing. We'd better go home."

These complaints came especially from Dé-koro's slaves, instigated by their leader, Kanou-ba-nyouma, and by their hatred of the ton-masa, their master's enemy. One day Dé-koro's people departed, but Bakari, though reduced to his own forces, was no less determined to take the [54] village. However, the difficult situation in which he found himself, the demoralization of his people and the dissatisfaction they displayed even about him, all conspired to undermine his strong constitution. He fell into a malady, brought on, it is said, by poison and sorcery. Unable now to lead, he returned to Ségou, where he died shortly after. Bakari reigned for six months; his funeral ceremonies were celebrated in the usual manner.

Dé-koro (1711-1736). On the fortieth day, Bakari was succeeded by his brother, Dé-koro.

*173 From the beginning he was at odds with the ton-dyon', who since Mamari's death, had been divided in their allegiance among the probable contenders for authority. And then, Dé-koro's refusal to live at Ségou-koro created such trouble for him that he had to yield, at least on the surface, for after all he came only to the Monday and Thursday meetings.

Since the situation was rapidly becoming untenable, he decided to assert his authority through force and terror. In order to break the resistance of the ton-dyon', he decided to get at them through their leaders. To Bilali, one of his father's oldest slaves, he said: "What have you got to talk about? You're nothing but a lazy good-for-nothing; you're the last one at work while I myself am there at dawn." A little later, in an access of insane rage, he had the old man seized and nailed to a baobab tree. The wretched corpse remained there all winter, horrible evidence of the anger and power of the master. The ton-dyon' trembled.

The winter season having passed, Dé-koro got together a column which he led against Kirango. However, his efforts were vain and, for fear of being abandoned by his troops, he returned to Ségou. He could not remain there long, for discontent grew around him and threatened to bring him ruin. So, after reorganizing his army, he crossed the river and attacked Doroni, a village on the left bank. His forces were unsuccessful and he had to retreat. Along the way his people got out of hand, some wanting to return to Doroni, some to proceed to Ségou, and others intending to take a rest. The last opinion prevailed and so Dé-koro spent a year at Sama with most of his men.

[55] Enraged at his reverses, which he attributed to lack of discipline among his people, he finally got back to Ségou and summoned the four principal chiefs: the ton-masa, Kanou-banyouma, Kafadyougou and Kolé. He told them in a terrible voice: "You no longer want to till the fields or to make war. This must stop!" "You'll get nothing from us," said the ton-masa, "because you treat us badly, and you have no success in fighting because you have no 'luck'." Dé-koro broke off the interview and commanded each of them to send him 60 men.

At Dé-koro's orders, the blacksmith fa Kourou placed each of the contingents of 60 men along each of the four sides of

*173 a square drawn on the ground, and at once the native masons, in Dé-koro's presence, built four walls enclosing the men. (1).

1. Raffenel gave a dramatic account of these events with the imaginative license of a griot.

"Thus, I shall live in this room in the midst of my slaves, and they will have no choice but to guard me," said Dé-koro. And the ton-dyon' trembled. Only the ton-masa had the courage to protest, saying: "If I had known the fate in store for my unfortunate companions, I should never have obeyed your orders." "Well," said Dé-koro, "on the day you refuse to obey my orders, I shall make a bench of your body and sit upon it."

When winter came, Dé-koro summoned the leaders of the ton-dyon'. He gave 12,000 mattocks to the ton-masa, 8,000 to Kafadyougou, and 11,000 to Kanou-ba-nyouma. To each he assigned an area to be cultivated since they had all refused to resume the war. Fassoun, Nyé-dingué-dou and Ngolo Ké-ba were left in peace because they agreed to follow him.

The ton-masa refused to cultivate the field assigned him because he wanted to farm near his village, and the two other leaders, assigned to similar work, shared his views. Dé-koro tried to overcome this opposition but, failing to do so, he ordered the ton-masa to go away to take Kirango. The ton-masa agreed and went with his followers to the walls of Kirango, where he was roundly defeated and forced to call upon Dé-koro for help. Dé-koro replied with a formal order to take the village. The ton-masa and his people returned to Ségou of their own accord.

[56] Matters remained unchanged for some time and the ton-masa limited himself to coming to Ségou-koro for the Monday and Thursday gatherings.

The situation was serious and might have taken a turn for the worse at the slightest pretext. Two old friends of Mamari, the founder of the clan, were aware of this. Of their own accord they came to Dé-koro and told him: "This cannot go on; you are heading straight for a catastrophe. Discontent surrounds you and grows worse each day. Agree to receive the ton-masa and have done with

†173 all this." Dé-koro replied: "I'm not responsible -- it is the ton-masa." The two old men then asked the chief of Kamana to intercede, but Dé-koro persisted in affirming: "I'm not the chief of Bélé-koro; the ton-masa is."

Appeals made to the ton-masa gradually brought about a lessening of tension, and one day he finally appeared before Dé-koro. The ton-masa knelt down and, improvising a halter from his blouse, put his hands behind his back and bent his head to the ground, saying: "I shall cultivate the great field at Ségou-koro this year."

The ton-masa kept his word and six of the slave leaders followed his example. A large area was under cultivation and so the harvest was large. When the millet had been threshed and the master, accompanied by his faithful fa Kourou, came to see it, the ton-masa cried: "Here is our work! Henceforth we are only farmers and you will have to get along with millet alone." Dé-koro was furious and had his griot proclaim that never more would the ton-masa touch a mattock and that he was to get his knife ready.

The ton-dyon' returned to their respective homes and, when winter came, did no farming. When winter was over, Dé-koro assembled the leaders of the ton-dyon' and proposed an attack on Tamani. The ton-masa said: "What's the use of attacking Tamani? It's only a village inhabited by the weak Marka people. It would be much better to fight against Nyé-n-tigui, chief of Soroko." Dé-koro agreed. A column started off, only to find, on arrival, that the village had been evacuated: Nyé-n-tigui had been forewarned.

Dé-koro's wrath was terrible. "This is your work!" he accused the leaders of the ton-dyon'. "It is you who have [57] warned Nyé-n-tigui of the fate awaiting him. Once more you have betrayed me. Well, be informed that my knife is ready; before too long I shall make use of it on the public square at Ségou and I shall not stop until a stream of blood flows down to the river."

He had a large place prepared for the proposed executions, and the terrified slaves no longer showed their faces in Ségou-koro.

*173 Dé-koro summoned the ton-masa and ordered him to assemble the ton-dyon' on a certain day, but on that day no one appeared. Thereupon, Dé-koro dispatched a Samaké to warn the slave leaders individually to turn up. They came and he asked them: "Why has no one been coming to the Monday and Thursday meetings for the last three months?" They replied: "You threatened us and we were afraid." He made an appointment with them a week from that day when they were to take an oath with him.

The general assembly desired by Dé-koro took place, but it did not result in the agreement for which he had hoped. The slaves decided among themselves to meet a fortnight later and to take matters into their own hands.

On the fifteenth day at dawn, the ton-masa entered Ségou bougou, Dé-koro's official residence. He went to the master's house and entered. There he met Dé-koro who, escorted by his blacksmith carrying a basin of hot water, was about to make his ablutions. Dé-koro had long since ceased to feel secure because the enmity and hatred which he sensed around him gave him no rest. He was afraid to be alone and his blacksmith was always with him. When he saw the ton-masa armed, he knew that something extraordinary was afoot and challenged him: "What are you doing in my house at this hour?" The ton-masa replied: "I have come to warn you that the hour has come to settle our accounts, for I have not forgotten the lashing you inflicted upon me." Turning to the blacksmith, Dé-koro told him to go and fetch spears. The latter obeyed, but at that very moment the ton-masa shot Dé-koro and, when the blacksmith reappeared, he killed him too beside his master. A griot named Koum-bilé, attracted by the noise, appeared just as the ton-masa was unfastening the piece of goat-skin which contained the chief's [643] amulets and talismans and appropriating the golden axe which was the insignia of command. Koum-bilé cried out and called for help; the sofa came up without hurrying. [58] The griot identified the ton-masa as the murderer, but they listened in silence and then helped him to hide in their ranks, whence he fled to So-finna.

*173

The Ton-dyon'
(1736-1750)

At around two o'clock in the afternoon, the time fixed for the general assembly, all the slaves were present. Unaware of what had happened, they had gathered as planned. Soon after, the ton-masa appeared, bearing a spear, a silken cord and the golden axe; he was followed by a young man. He stopped at the foot of a baobab tree in full view of the assemblage. He attached one end of the cord to his own neck and the other to the young man's; then with his spear he transfixed the young man, who fell down with a cry. The ton-masa seemed to have been dragged down in the fall and everyone rushed forward. However, they found the ton-masa seated on the corpse, his neck free of the cord and in his hand the golden axe, insignia of authority.

When Kanou-ba-nyouma asked him for explanation, he replied: "This is what I have done."

"You did wrong. You broke your promise because we had decided that we would all kill him together. But you acted alone so as to reap all the benefits for yourself."

"No, that is not true. I knew that such an act could not be performed by several men, whereas I was sure that I could carry it off on the strength of my hate."

"That's a lie! You were guided only by your personal ambition and you killed him only to take his place and to get his gold."

Ngolo Ké-ba intervened to say: "This discussion is painful and futile. The past is past, so let us deal with the present. Our master is dead; let us bury him."

Kon Bilali, Kanou-ba-nyouma and Kolé prepared the corpse and buried it. According to custom, the slaves spent seven days before the dead man's door. Kolé told the wives to retire to Ségou-koro and undertook to feed them.

[59] Then the ton-masa sent everyone away and set the date for a general assembly at Ségou-koro a fortnight from then.

Ton-massa Dembélé (1736-1740). On the appointed day, all the slaves turned up. Ton-massa (1), dressed in red, passed

1. He henceforth bears the title of his

*113 former function as his own name.

through the serried ranks and squatted against the wall on the spot commonly chosen by Mamari, the founder of the empire.

Kafa-dyougou was the first to come forward, prostrate himself, and say: "I, ni sege ton' koro-ba." All the rest followed suit.

After this marching past, Ton-massa summoned the marabouts and told them:

"Allah will judge between my master and me. Therefore, I don't ask your opinion about what is past, but I should like you to intervene between my brothers and me to make peace."

"The marabouts are conciliators who have nothing to do with our affairs," cried Kanou-ba-nyouma. "We are not having a dispute. Since it was you who did everything, it is you who have earned the command."

"Kanou-ba-nyouma, I have not asked your opinion. Only Kafa-dyougou here is qualified to make an unbiased statement."

"That's all very well," answered Kafa-dyougou, "but the fact is, you don't want to hear the truth."

Addressing the marabouts, Ton-massa said: "If we were to collect all our knives, there is no doubt but that we could find enough leather to make a single sheath. But if each of us wanted to make a sheath for his own knife, there would not be enough leather?

Turning to the slaves, he asked: "What shall we do with the master's wives? To whom shall we give them? Who will take Bakari's wife, who, Dé-koro's?"

Kanou-ba-nyouma interposed: "It's useless for you to bother about such matter. Everything belongs to you and we don't want anything. Is that all you want to tell us?"

"I've nothing to add," said Ton-massa; "I have my own wives and they are enough for me, that is why I thought those among us who had no wives might take the master's."

[60] "There's nothing more to be said, I tell you. So keep everything and we'll see about it later."

*173 "Very well," said Ton-massa, "I'll give you the cowries, you divide them, let's celebrate. We are free and life was made to be enjoyed."

Kanou-ba-nyouma thanked him on behalf of all and asked leave to retire with his companions.

Ton-massa kept with him Ngolo Dyara, Kolé and Na-n-koro-ba Nzan-gué.

He appointed another assembly for a fortnight later when offerings would be made to the dead and to the idols.

Everyone was prompt at the assembly.

Ton-massa said: "Now then, where shall we begin? With the dead or with the idols?"

"You ask our advice?" cried Kanou-ba-nyouma. "You paid no attention to our views when you killed our master! You wanted to be chief -- now exert your authority!"

"Very well, we'll begin with the dead," said Ton-massa.

[782] He sacrificed a young man to the shades of Mamari, the founder of the clan, and then ordered the sofa leaders to sacrifice two more, and Kanou-ba-nyouma still another. This was the first time that human sacrifices were performed on the tomb of the dead.

On the eighth day after this ceremony, Ton-massa called a general gathering of the slaves and, when all had arrived, cried out: "We buried a corpse but left a foot protruding." He alluded to Mamari's last-remaining son, Dyon-kolo, who lived at Oftala on the left bank of the Niger.

"We did away with Dé-koro only because he did wrong," said Kolé, "and we still have the same veneration for our master [Mamari] and his descendants. The right thing would be to bring Dyon-kolo here, where he can take his father's place and bring peace among us."

Kanou-ba-nyouma said to Ton-massa: "How will you ever be able to face a man whose brother you murdered? Now will you explain your crime to him, a crime that has put you in his father's place? Nevertheless, I shan't oppose the idea simply to perpetuate our discord and, if it is the general will to bring Dyon-kolo back, so be it."

[61] Two Peul, named Bon-gué and Ndyan, were selected to carry out the delicate mission to Dyon-kolo. Upon reaching

*173 Dyon-kolo's village, they cleverly set forth the reasons for the catastrophe and concluded by saying that the "people of Ségou" were counting on him, the son of Mamari, to put an end to the discord which was so harmful to all. Dyon-kolo had been listening to all this with feigned patience, but suddenly broke out in great rage: "Do you actually think that I'm mad enough to court the same fate as my brothers? These walls," and with that he struck the wall of his house, "were erected by my father. Here I intend to remain and here I shall defend myself, even against all of you. Go away and never come back!"

When the Peul returned home and reported Dyon-kolo's words, Kanou-ba-nyouma exclaimed: "Well, we'll have to concede that he has kept his father's talent for clear thinking. He may be young, but he understands."

Ton-massa then came to a decision: "Since the man who should have been our master disdains us, it is I, a slave of our master before his first-born son arrived, who will henceforth command the land of Ségou. Be informed that you now belong to me. Every village must bring me 10,000 cowries on every Thursday and 5,000 on every Monday."

He had this proclaimed throughout the town.

Kanou-ba-nyouma said to him: "Why did you wait so long to announce your plans? Did I not say, the very first day, that you acted only in the interest of your own ambitions?"

"No, I merely carried out what we had agreed to do."

"We had not agreed that you were to do it alone. However, no matter. You are the chief; So command, and we shall obey. The future will take care of everything."

In order to break off all relations with Ségou, Dyon-kolo sent for his sister, ba Sana, who lived near Ségou-koro. In answer to this patently hostile act, Ton-massa sent a column, commanded by Ngolo Dyara. The latter attacked Dyon-kolo's people and took 40 prisoners, whom he sent to Ton-massa. Ton-massa sacrificed them to the idols and, having decided to deal finally with Dyon-kolo, called together the leaders of the slaves to ask them to provide a column to be sent against Oïtala.

[62] The column was organized and met at Farako on the day set.

*173 Ton-massa attacked Oïtala without success; his troops faltered and became disorganized. He caught the deserters and harangued them: "Where are you running? If you abandon this effort, our master's work will be forever compromised. You swore to obey me, our master's first child, so show that you are not perjurers." They heeded him and returned to the walls of Oïtala, which they besieged for a whole year. Every day Dyon-kolo made a sortie and pushed back the assailants commanded by Ngolo Dyara. But the attackers never gave up and constantly returned to the assault. The village was finally forced to surrender, and Dyon-kolo, who had fought bravely, was killed by Ngolo himself.

As a reward for these services, Ton-massa gave 1,000 people to Ngolo Dyara, "to mend the tears in his shirt."

After this affair, Ton-massa called a general assembly of the slaves and told them: "Now that the obstacles have been cleared away, it is proper to swear an oath of loyalty to my cause and also to arrange for the future succession to authority by indicating clearly those persons who should forever be forbidden to succeed."

"Since you see matters so clearly," said Kanou-ba-nyouma, "it is your duty to guide us and to indicate to us the names of those who must never succeed to power."

"It seems to me obvious," said Ton-massa," that the 120 slave leaders, left behind by Mamari, should never seek to command."

"Ah well," said Kanou-ba-nyouma," that's a question which we don't ask you to solve."

"As far as I'm concerned," said Kolé, "I renounce my claim to authority and shall retire to Koni-m-ba to live in peace as a farmer."

No one else entered the discussion and, since the subject was dropped, the question of succession was not settled.

In order to be prepared for serious troubles, Ton-massa required 240 men of each sofa leader. He sent [63] the force so constituted to Massa-la to reinforce the garrison placed there by Mamari under the command of old Na-ba-dyé. He assigned Ngolo Dyara to Ségou-koro to be responsible for the security of Ségou-Sikoro, Ségou-bougou and Ségou-koura.

*173 As for Ton-massa himself, he settled at Kohin (1) and so

[312]

1. He is said to have started work on a canal which was to bring water from the Niger to Kohin (Quintin and Delafosse).

effectively isolated himself from his subjects that he did not return to Ségou-koro for about a year. He returned then only because as chief he had to preside at the great annual festival which, in his absence, Ngolo had organized. Moreover, having arrived in the morning barely in time to preside over the ceremonies, he departed that same evening for Kohin. In that village he called a general assembly of the slaves and told them that, since he intended to return to Miniankala, his native place, he wanted before his departure a reciprocal oath to be exchanged to unite them forever. He caused his idol, Nko, to be brought in, enclosed in the skin of a black cat, and after having sacrificed a chicken, he said: "Nko, you may kill me if I ever betray the people of Ségou, but also kill the people of Ségou if they betray me."

Kanou-ba-nyouma interrupted: "No! You've no right to take an oath for us; you've spoken for yourself and it's our turn now."

Ton-massa went off to a distance.

Kanou-ba-nyouma sacrificed a chicken and, over the victim's palpitating body, said: "Nko, kill anyone who comes to Ségou to make his fortune and then goes away again. On the other hand, enrich any man who comes to make his fortune and remains."

However, Ton-massa persisted in his plan and departed.

A small escort of a few sofa under Mori-fin accompanied him. He crossed the Bani and halted at Fallo, where he had a stockade built that could protect him until the arrival of the column he had requested from Ségou. Four months passed, however, and the column did not come.

One day Kanou-ba-nyouma called a general assembly of the ton-dyon' and said: "Is there among you a [64] man with enough courage to go after Ton-massa?"

*173 Nzan-fato offered himself.

"No," said Kanou-ba-nyouma, "you are too young. This mission requires a great deal of experience, for the man will be risking his life."

Nzan-fato was so insistent that he was accepted.

"Very well," said Kanou-ba-nyouma, "go to Ton-massa and tell him, not in my name but in the name of all of us, that, if he is not back within a month, he will be deposed. The power he usurped is not of a kind that one can carry away. At the same time, order Mori-fin to leave Ton-massa as soon as the deadline has passed."

Nzan-fato executed his mission faithfully.

When the period of grace had expired and Ton-massa persisted in his attitude, Mori-fin returned to Ségou, leaving his chief surrounded only by his wives and guarded by a single sofa. Thereupon Ton-massa returned to Kohin, where he shut himself up completely for three days while he made his plans. Then he called together the leaders of the ton-dyon'.

To Kanou-ba-nyouma he cried: "You refuse to obey me!"

"No," replied Kanou-ba-nyouma, "But did you not rise to power through us? Now, we remain at Ségou, while you elect to go off and live in your own country far from us. Each of us has his own native place, too, but none of us goes back there, knowing that if ever we separate, our power will end. Follow our example and we'll do whatever you ask."

"Take care, Kanou-ba-nyouma, it's imprudent to disturb a vulture when he is feeding on carrion."

They went their separate ways.

Kanou-ba-nyouma called a meeting of the ton-dyon' for Monday at Ségou-koro. On the following Wednesday Ton-massa came and demanded a column to attack Konguéré. This was a ruse designed to have his people escorted to Miniankala. The ton-dyon' refused to follow him. However, a certain Fasson, a native of the Kala region, agreed to lead warriors against the village in question on condition that they return to Ségou immediately after the fray. Ton-massa turned down this offer since it destroyed his plot. After much discussion and many intrigues, a band finally agreed to follow Ton-massa. The village

*173 was taken, but, in the course of the attack, Ton-massa was [65] wounded in the ear by an arrow which could only have been shot by someone behind him and by one of his own people. The wound festered so rapidly that it was necessary to put Ton-massa on a litter to carry him back to Kohin. There he died, almost completely alone.

He had ruled for four years and was interred at Kohin.

*173 643 Kanou-ba-nyouma (1740-1744). As was customary, the ton-dyon' came to Ségou-koro for seven days. On the eighth day, when all were about to return to their villages, Kanou-ba-nyouma sent forth a griot, preceded by a boy carrying the bow and quiver of Mamari, the founder of the clan. The crier announced throughout the town: "The royal post (1) is now vacant. Our master lived

1. That is, the supreme command.

out his time and died; then followed the crime of the one who has just died. Now, let the man who feels strong enough to assume the vacant place take this bow and this quiver."

When the griot had covered the whole town, he returned to where the ton-dyon' were assembled and put down the bow and quiver in the midst of the group. Kanou-ba-nyouma then said: "Let the man who feels strong enough take these relics and the place of Mamari."

Ndyan, who was a Peul as was Kanou-ba-nyouma, then stated: "We Peul who guarded Mamari's sheep will also guard those of his successor. May the people of Ségou, therefore, pardon me for what I am about to say, for I speak in all sincerity and, I think, in conformity with the sentiments of this assembly. You are the only one, Kanou-ba-nyouma, who can take this place; it is your right as the oldest man after Ton-massa, who has just died."

These words were unanimously approved.

*173 "Very well," said Kanou-ba-nyouma, "I accept this bow and quiver, but the arrows must find their mark: we shall go to war." So, on the spot, he demanded a column and it was granted him. He attacked and took Niamina, then Sambou-ma. Enriched by the spoils of the vanquished, he returned to Ségou-koro and rested there for a year. Then he summoned Da-sou, Ton-massa's son, from Kohin and ordered him to return the gold which

*173 his father, according to Kanou-ba-nyouma, had carried off [66] at the time of the murder of Dé-koro. Da-sou in turn declared that he had found nothing of the sort in his father's estate, so Kanou-ba-nyouma put him in irons, hoping to recover some of the loot. However, Da-sou made his escape.

At the beginning of the winter season, Kanou-ba-nyouma made many raids in the environs of Kohin, in the course of which 1,000 people of the village were slain, while 6,000 more were distributed among the warriors; all for Da-sou, he fled to Bani-n-ko.

Kanou-ba-nyouma then turned against Kafa-dyougou and removed him from his command of 3,000 people. Outraged, Kafa-dyougou went to consult one Ténénkou-hilé, who lived at Tyo-fin-na and was reputed to be an adept in the occult sciences. By means of magic, he afflicted Kanou-ba-nyouma with a partial paralysis on the left side.

Kanou-ba-nyouma died after four years of suffering.

Kafa-dyougou (1744-1748). Kafa-dyougou, the eldest of the ton-dyon" leaders, took the bow and quiver. The first thing he did was to turn on his associate, Kalé, the safa leader, who fled to Dyarama-na in Miniankala.

After holding authority for four years, Kafa-dyougou died in mysterious circumstances.

Period of Anarchy
(1748-1758)

After the death of Kanou-ba-nyouma, no one dared to assume authority: the elders perhaps out of prudence and the younger men because they were not sure enough of the necessary support. All knew well that the post was a dangerous one. However, a few managed to collect partisans, and at one point it looked as if the issue was to be decided between Ngolo Dyara and Na-n-koro-ba Nzan-gué.

A meeting was held during which Nzan-gué explained: "I am now the eldest, *for* I belonged to Soumou Saro, Mamari's mother, and thus am entitled to command."

*193 "That's possible," insinuated Ngolo, "but as far as I'm concerned, you are only a farmer and [67] I know of no warlike talents of yours to justify your claims to this bow and quiver."

Nzan-fato exclaimed in his turn: "Nzan-gué is only a woman. The only blood that he's seen -- and that reluctantly -- was on the day when he was circumcised."

Thereupon Ngolo Dyara, to emphasize the fact that he was separating himself from the pretender, put all the idols in a pirogue and took them to his house at Ségou-Sikoro. Since the idols counted for everything in the minds of the ton-dyon', most of them followed him meekly.

Ngolo Dyara and Na-n-koro-ba Nzan-gué had been feuding for two years when one of Mamari's old followers, named Nzan-gué-ba, who lived at Kohin, intervened. He told Na-n-koro-ba Nzan-gué that Ngolo Dyara was planning to attack him, Nzan-gué-ba, and begged for help. Na-n-koro-ba Nzan-gué allowed himself to be cornered at Kohin, with 3,000 men, in his attempt to defend Nzan-gué-ba. The latter then informed Ngolo, who rushed up and besieged the village. Then Nzan-gué-ba said to Na-n-koro-ba Nzan-gué: "I don't want to get involved in your quarrel with Ngolo Dyara and, if I keep you here any longer, my people and I will be risking terrible reprisals. Therefore, leave my village." Na-n-koro-ba Nzan-gué and his followers departed and all were massacred, while 2,000 people of the village of Kohin fell into Ngolo's hands. However, instead of making them all prisoners, he sent them home and thus became very popular at Kohin. This act influenced two of Nzan-gué-ba's slaves to give themselves to Ngolo, and 2,000 others followed suit.

With his forces thus strengthened, Ngolo turned his attention to Nzan-gué-ba. He called the old man out from the town, ostensibly to confer with him, and when he came, unsuspectingly and without an escort, Ngolo ordered him to be seized and sacrificed to the idols.

Ngolo summoned all of the chiefs of ton-dyon' who were older than he: Ngolo Ké-ba of Sama; Na-ba-di; Tyé-koura of Nango; Si-dioki; and Famon. These all came along as well as the sofa, for it was a Thursday.

#173 "Well," asked Ngolo," what are we to do now that we have eliminated the opposition?"

"Mamari gave each of us our share; so let it go at that," said Ngolo Ké-ba.

[68] This proposal, however, did not suit Ngolo, who had his own ideas. There was still one man in his way: Kolé, the old leader of the sofa. He proposed to summon Kolé and give him supreme authority; he had assembled the sofa only to assure himself of their support.

Bon-gué said: "We Peul are shepherds and not slaves, so we can express ourselves frankly in all sincerity. We think that you, Ngolo Dyara, are determined not to submit henceforth to the will of anyone. Your axe will in future cut only your own wood."

"I am ready," said Ngolo," to follow Kolé, for he is our eldest and we owe him respect and obedience. However, if he refuses to command us, I have decided to take the vacant post."

"Well," said Bon-gue," if you're so set on Kolé, you know where to find him; go and get him."

Ngolo sent for Kolé, but the latter refused to come. Ngolo himself went to Kolé and thrice swore an oath of loyalty to him, but the old man remained inflexible. Finally, he seemed to make up his mind and went to Dioni. Ngolo at once joined him there and presented him with Mamari's hat. Kolé repulsed this advance and said: "There are three chiefs older than I am: Ngolo Ké-ba, Nyé-dingué-dou and Fasson."

Kolé died soon after this meeting at Dioni.

After the traditional seven days had been spent at the door of the deceased, Ngolo Dyara once more summoned the ton-dyon's. "Now," he told them, "we must part; as far as I am concerned, so long as Mori-fin and Nzan-fato are loyal to me I have no anxiety about the future, for we shall live by pillaging."

So the separation took place.

When he came to Ségou-koro and saw the ton-dyon' ready to cross over to the left bank, where they lived, Ngolo called them back. "Our master," he told them," appeared to me in a dream and said: 'Do not let my children scatter; reunite them and give them a leader, for a body without a head cannot survive.' So come back in a week and we shall see."

*173 On the following Monday all meant to arrive promptly at the meeting; however, out of habit, instead of coming to Ségou-Sikoro [69] they went to Ségou-koro (1). Ngolo went there too,

[778]

1. Which was, for all practical purposes, their holy place.

bringing with him the four principal idols: ba Koungo-ba, Nyé-dingué-dou, na Ngolo-ko and Kolokoloni. Addressing the throng, he cried: "Someone must be chosen to look after these idols, for they are languishing in neglect. As for me, I shall keep the sacrificial knife."

"If the idols are languishing," interrupted Ngolo Ké-ba, "it's your fault, because our master has entrusted them to you. That's your duty, quite as much as guarding our master's houses at Ségou-Sikoro. For our part, all we want are guns and gunpowder."

"I can't give you guns and powder," answered Ngolo Dyara, "but I will give you all of Ton-massa's wives as well as the wives of Kanou-ba-nyouma and Kafa-dyougou. I can't marry them myself because I've married Mamari's daughter. The powder and the guns remain my share."

"That's nothing but trickery," replied Ngolo Ké-ba. "Why should we need these women when we all have our own!"

[587] "I'm not playing any trick," said Ngolo Dyara, "I'm offering you these women because it is customary among us for brothers to marry the wives of their deceased brothers and, if I were to keep them for myself, you would certainly cry scandal and injustice."

"No, we shan't say anything, for we're at your mercy and very uneasy. We're caught like a rat in the claws of a cat."

"Well, I'll do you no harm, provided that you swear to leave me as the guardian of everything up to the time when we once more have a master."

He dismissed them and called a meeting of the chiefs for the following Saturday at Ba-dyi-soumalén-ba, on the left bank of the Niger. Each chief was expressly ordered to bring with him only his kasa-bearer (2).

2. The kasa is a kind of woolen coverlet

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2. The kasa is a kind of woolen coverlet

from Macina. Persons of importance are accompanied by a bearer who carries the coverlet and spreads it out as a seat.

[70] On the day set, Ngolo Dyara secretly sent his son Ntyi across to the left bank with 2,500 horsemen.

Each chief appeared, with his bearer carrying a chicken and a red-haired dog for use in the ceremony of swearing on the idols. Ngolo himself brought a chicken and an ox.

When the time arrived, Ngolo went first to take his place in front of the idol. He killed a chicken in accordance with the rites and said: "Idol, make me guardian of the door of my master until the day when I replace him."

"That's no oath, and your words are inadmissible," cried Ngolo Kɛ́-ba.

"Then show me what I must do."

"It's not my place to teach you how to behave before an idol whom you have been serving for years. What I say is, you are falsifying the purpose of this meeting. You have only to say: 'Idol, if I betray my brothers, you may cut out my heart and my liver, but if they betray me, do the same thing to them.'"

"I shall never say such a thing."

"Then let us part."

"You are the oldest men here. Speak first."

"No, it is your duty to begin and you have only a few words to say."

"I shan't say them. Let's leave."

Ntyi came up to say: "What is all this, father? Hasn't the oath been taken yet?"

Ngolo Kɛ́-ba pointed at Ntyi and asked Ngolo Dyara in an ironical tone: "This is a kasa-bearer, too, I presume?"

Then addressing those present, Ntyi called out: "I can understand that you may be in no hurry to get over this, but I'm getting anxious to be the son of the king of Ségou. Come on, hurry up! You there, Fasson, take the oath!"

At that very moment the horsemen appeared. Fasson made no objection and the others followed suit meekly. When all had sworn, Ngolo Dyara, who had taken no oath, put the idols back into his pirogue.

*173 "What's this?" exclaimed Ngolo Ké-ba. "You haven't sworn any oath, Ngolo!"

"No, the oath is required only of slaves," replied Ngolo.

He set a general assembly for a week thence and required [71] each chief to bring him a contingent of 500 men for his personal bodyguard, which thus came to be made up of 12,000 men.

The Dyara

Ngolo and his descendants (Ngolo-si-ou) (1750-1861)

Ngolo (1750-1787). Ngolo entrusted Ségou-Sikoro to Mori-fin and he himself settled at Ségou-koro.

From then on, he was obsessed by a single idea: to see his native village and his relatives once more and to avenge himself for having been reduced to slavery for the sake of a few measures of grain.

Pretending that he wanted to offer a sacrifice on his father's tomb, he took a column to Nyouanna. En route he made successive halts at Kono-dimini in the watercourse of Massa and at Kéléko in the watercourse of Signa-na, before marching on Nyouanna. He ordered Nzan-fato, who did not know what it was all about, to seize the village. "But this is Nyouanna, your native village!" said Nzan-fato. "So it is, but do as I say," answered Ngolo.

The village fell, and among the prisoners were Ngolo's brothers, uncles, his whole kin group. He had them all securely bound and indicated those who were to be sacrificed immediately "to the drums of the ton-dyon'." He had his brother Ba-dyi placed apart and, as soon as they were alone, called a slave to loosen the bonds, pretending that they were too tight; soon after, he had him released completely.

Night came and they were alone; Ngolo threw him a shirt and asked:

"Didn't you have a younger brother?"

*173 "Yes, but he was given by my uncle to Mamari Kouloubali, the chief of Ségou.

"What became of him? Why didn't you ransom him?"

"I wanted to, but my uncle said that Mamari was keeping him by force. We learned later that Mamari had got rid of him, either by killing him, as some said, or by selling him, according to others."

"Where is your father?"

[72] "He is dead."

"And your mother?"

"She is dead too."

"Would you show me their tombs?"

"Willingly."

And, side by side in the darkness, the two men went off to find the tombs. Ngolo knelt beside his mother's grave and resumed the conversation.

"Weren't you with your brother when your uncle took him to Ségou?"

"Yes, I even stayed there for a few days to arrange for his food."

"Was your hostess not a woman named Damé Balo?"

"Yes, she was."

"And when you left, your young brother accompanied you as far as Doukounna, did he not? Ah, I remember it well! For it was I, Ngolo, and I am your brother."

The two men embraced each other and wept.

The next day Ngolo sent Mori-fin with twenty men to raise two low mounds over the graves of his parents. He introduced to everyone his brother Ba-dyi, whom he had sit beside him so as to show the convincing family resemblance.

On the following day, Ngolo attacked and captured the village of Touro-kounna-na. There, he took prisoner his two maternal uncles, Sina and Sadyo, whom he reproached bitterly for having sold him and made no effort to ransom him. Then he sacrificed them to the "drums of the ton-dyon'."

Next day he attacked and destroyed the village of his maternal grandmother.

After all this, he returned to Ségou with large quantities

*173 of booty and, en route, passed through Dioni, ostensibly to visit Kolé's grave; in actual fact he went there to claim a contingent of 740 men from each of Kolé's sons.

During this same year he placed his son Ntyi at Bagamabougou in charge of 27,000 men. Then he sent for Ngolo Ké-ba and spoke to him thus: "No one has ever seen one cat catch rats for another; the cat who eats rats has hair in its excrement. This is just to inform you that I intend to work for myself alone and for my own people and that neither you nor anyone else is going to succeed me. My sons will be the only ones to take my place."

[73] "That's fine," replied Ngolo Ké-ba, "I don't want anyone's patrimony."

A week later, Ngolo sent Séri-ba to Farako with 9,000 men and instructions to keep an eye on Ngolo Ké-ba's activities. "My brother Ngolo Ké-ba," he explained to Séri-ba, "has assured me that he has no desire to inherit from anyone. Perhaps you are not so independent? If you'd like to inherit from him, you must earn the right to do so." He then assigned his griot, Tigui-ba, to the same place with 1,000 men and gave him orders to spy on Séri-ba, who was further placed under a close surveillance.

Ngolo summoned Tyé-koura from Nango, but since he was ill Tyé-koura sent along his son.

"Though Mamari Kouloubali set your father up at Nango with 6,000 men, he has never since that day set foot at Ségou nor sent any offerings for the idols. Go tell him to send me 3,000 men at once."

Tyé-koura replied: "Mamari gave each man his share and so much the worse for the one who couldn't keep it. I shall give nothing."

Ngolo attacked Tyé-koura and, after defeating him, parcelled out all his people as follows: a third to Kono-dimini; a third to Soro-la; and a third to Nka-ra. Further, he ordered Na-ba-dé to occupy Tyé-koura's village with 3,000 men, but Na-ba-dé refused. Then, to force him to obey, he told the people of Kon-dimini, Soro-la and Nka-ra to prevent Na-ba-dé

*173 from cultivating his fields and thus deprived him of 1,000 slaves, who, after settling at Massa, submitted to Ngolo Dyara. The latter established them at Somi-na near Ségou with orders to watch over Na-ba-dé.

Ngolo assembled the sofa and told them that he wanted to do something for his brother Dyi-di [sic]. He placed him at Dougou-fin with 7,500 men and assigned to him all the taxes paid by the region between Dougou-fin and Dyana-bougou (about 600 villages). This region was divided among five great chiefs, all friends of Mamari, as follows: Sigui-sogo Saro at Somo; Demba Kouloubali at Ourouma-na; Mamourou Kouloubali at Toukoto; Néné Kouloubali at Diaba; and Tammoura Saro at Monionko. None of them was willing to pay even a single grain [74] of millet to Dyi-di. So Ngolo, at the head of an army of 72 "foot" [units of foot-soldiers?] invaded the country of Somo. He took 140 villages in one day and brought the number of his troops to 20,000, placing them under the command of Dyi-di.

The other four chiefs made common cause and fled to Diaba. Ngolo attacked and took Diaba, whose chief, Néné Kouloubali, was his father-in-law. He took Néné Kouloubali back to Ségou but, in order not to distress his wife, Ma-koro, mother of his son Ma-n-son and daughter of Néné, he sent the latter back to Diaba with a contingent of 7,500 men.

One day Ngolo consulted Nzan-fato about what should be done about Yarouga Kouloubali, a friend of Mamari's, who had never sent any tribute to Ségou. Nzan-fato was not in favor of an armed expedition but thought, rather, that a fine of 500 captives would give Yarouga a clearer understanding of his obligations. However, Yarouga sent back word that he could not possibly pay any such fine; so Ngolo dispatched Gon-bilé with 2,000 men to Gouï to keep an eye on Yarouga. At the same time he sent Somé-sigui-té-ma-é Dyara to Kala, also with 2,000 men, to prevent Yarouga from working his land and thus to make him see reason.

When Nyé-dingué-dou, leader of the captives, died, Ngolo Dyara sent the dead man's twin sons, Siné and Souo, to Nto-bougou.

*173 Further, he gave orders that Mamari's slaves were no longer to fraternize with his own slaves.

Around this time there arrived at Ségou one Sidi Baba Kouloubali, who explained that his visit was necessary in order to pay funeral respects to his dead relative, Dyon-kolo. However, Ngolo thought he detected rancor in this step and suspected that Sidi had come only to stir up trouble. So he drove him away, pursued him, and took his village (Kourou-na); during these events, Sidi himself died.

At Koutou-na [sic] Ngolo put Sila-maran Kouloubali, the deceased's uncle, in command and authorized him to give asylum to anyone fleeing from Ségou.

One day Ngolo consulted the marabouts as to how he should proceed in order to make sure that his name would never be forgotten. They advised him to dedicate one of his daughters to Allah, [75] and that is why he bestowed his daughter Nyé-koro on the marabout Mar-ka-ké Darbo of the village of Kala-bougou; her marriage payment included 10,000 slaves and a silver quiver. Then the marabouts told Ngolo to put golden rings in the ears of 120 crocodiles, saying: "In this way, your name will not perish as long as there are crocodiles in the river." In order to carry out this advice, Ngolo ordered the Somono chief, Baré Tyéro, to bring him 120 live crocodiles, and he had rings fastened in their ears.

Ngolo set up personal estates for certain of his children: Ma-n-son was given command of Mpé-ba-la with 2,000 men; Nyana-n-koro, that of Ségou-koro with 10,000 men; Péné Mamourou, that of Ségou-bougou with 10,000 men; Ba, that of Bla (near Togou) with 10,000 men; and Séri, that of So-fin-na with 10,000 men.

He gave his daughter Sanou in marriage to the chief of Saga-la (near Sokolo), one named Kassoum Kouloubali, and had her accompanied by 1,000 little girls, 1,000 boys and 1,000 young men.

Ngolo complained one day that his son Ntyi always returned to Ségou without any fanfare. When Ntyi heard this remark, he set out from his village, Bama-bougou, at the head of a strong army and went to attack Ségou, which he entered by the Banan-koro-da. Ngolo pretended to be very pleased with

*173 this performance, but actually he feared lest he had given his son unsuitable ideas. So, the very next day, on the advice of his circle of attendants, he sacrificed his grandson, Ma-n-son's eldest son, for the purpose of combatting Ntyi's evil intentions.

Ngolo then led an expedition to the southern part of his lands against a coalition of 38 chiefs who had concentrated their forces at Miniankala. He marched against them and dispersed them in a single day, and then headed east against Falé, the chief of Bala-koungo, who had organized an opposition. He was victorious and went off to ask the chief of Minya (Fala-dougou) why he had never brought so much as a chicken for the idols. He then captured this chief and sacrificed him to the idols.

The expedition against the chief of Minya had lasted for three years, but, without stopping to rest, Ngolo declared war on Macina and for three more years fought against Sila-maran [76] Yéro. The latter was killed during the war and this permitted Ngolo to occupy even the Tombo [Dogon] country.

Still without stopping (1), Ngolo attacked Souma-koulou,

1. According to certain traditions, Ngolo Dyara is supposed to have made two expeditions into Mossi and Yatenga lands in the time of chief Kongo. However, there is no recollection of these attacks in Yatenga tradition.

a village on the left bank of the Niger near Sokolo; he killed the chief Sama and the ruptured [hernieux] Kilintin-kolonto.

But under the walls of the village of Si-bougou, he was himself killed by evil spirits.

Ngolo had ruled for sixteen years -- eighteen, if the period of anarchy is included -- during which time he had very great influence on events.

Ma-n-son (1787-1808). Ngolo's son-in-law, Mar-ka-ké Darbo, had the corpse placed in a pirogue to be carried back to Ségou; but at the high ground of Sansanding, the spirits threw the remains into the river. Then a piece of wood was wrapped

*173 in a ox-hide in order to simulate the lost corpse, and the journey to Ségou continued. There Ma-n-son proceeded at once and all alone with the burial so that nothing should leak out. All these occurrences were kept strictly secret.

Nzan-fato handed over Ngolo's personal effects to Mar-ka-kɛ́ Darbo. When the latter reached Ségou, he sat down under a tree and sent word to Ngolo's children. They hurried up and, when they saw their father's garments, they broke into lamentations.

On the eighth day, Mar-ka-kɛ́ ordered Nzan-fatǫ to call together all the "people of Ségou" in order to name a chief, supposed to be the eldest of Ngolo's sons. When everyone had arrived, Mar-ka-kɛ́ planted a stake on the ground in front of the house of Ton-ma-kɛ́-blon-da, hung Ngolo's garments upon it, placed the idols around it and then summoned Ma-n-son, to whom he gave everything. Ma-n-son accepted, had everything carried into the dead man's house and himself went in.

Nyana-n-koro, who attended this ceremony with his brothers, protested vigorously. He demanded that Ngolo's effects be divided among all of his children and that the system of banga-bo be followed, since he thought that would eliminate Ma-n-son. Hoping to calm him, Ma-n-son told [77] Nyana-n-koro the circumstances of his father's death and explained how propriety had required the measures that had been taken and the secrecy that had been maintained. Nyana-n-koro, however, would not concede this, nor would he accept the fact that he, the favorite child of the late Ngolo, had been passed over. Furthermore, he claimed that occult practices had been used to cheat him of his rights.

After trying in vain to mediate, Mar-ka-kɛ́ sought out Ma-koro, Ngolo's widow, told her what was going on and informed her of the master's wishes: "'Ma-n-son is to take my place,' Ngolo had said, 'and his brothers are to succeed him in the order of their birth. Evil befall the one who fails to heed my wishes!'"

Ma-koro was only Ma-n-son's mother, but she had had the care of Nyana-n-koro since earliest infancy, for his mother had died in giving him birth.

*173 Since Ma-koro felt incapable of restoring peace between her children, she sought the intervention of Massa Taraoré, chief of Sou, near Diaba. The latter asked the help of Massa Taraoré or Sou ba, near Sansanding, and of Massa Doua-n-tan of Kama-na.

All three came to Farko, whither they summoned Ngolo's sons.

Ma-n-son came alone; Nyana-n-kolo was accompanied by two of his brothers. The three Massa insisted vigorously that Ngolo's last wishes be honored by his children and added in conclusion: "Didn't he himself have to wait a long time? He never complained, he never rebelled against the established order of succession." Nyana-n-koro remained inflexible and went off, saying: "My brother Ma-n-son has tricked me. He acted without my knowledge, treating me as something negligible. Any agreement between us is out of the question."

Ma-koro then appealed to the marabouts of Ségou-Sikoro and Togou. But Nyana-n-koro refused to heed their advice either. [428] "Under Moslem law," he asked, "what is done with the effects of a dead man?" "They are divided among his children," they replied. "Very well, that is what I want and what has been unjustly refused me."

Ma-koro summoned two other marabouts: Birama Kané of Sien and Kakamoko Abdoullahi Diari of Niamina. [78] In order to get rid of them, Nyana-n-koro gave each of them a mare, 100,000 cowries and 30 gros of gold, saying: "It's useless to insist; even if Ngolo himself implored me, I wouldn't yield."

Finally Nzan-fato, thinking to overcome Nyana-n-koro's stubbornness, appealed to those sentiments most likely to be susceptible of influence. "I'm older than your father," he told him. "You are my son and, if only for that reason, you should heed me; you cannot fail to respect the last wishes of your father." But Nyana-n-koro replied without emotion. "The time for words has passed -- all that matters rest between Allah and myself."

Nyana-n-koro opened hostilities one Sunday with a raid around Ségou; thus he took 200 prisoners, whom he carried off to

*173 Ségou-koura. The following month he seized another 100 prisoners.

Ma-n-son then had a deep well dug, and water was taken from the river only at night for fear of Nyana-n-koro's people. This state of affairs lasted for three months.

The winter season was at hand and Mori-fin complained to Ma-n-son: "You seem to pay very little attention to the disturbing situation in which we find ourselves, thanks to Nyana-n-koro's attacks. Yet we cannot live without eating and we cannot eat without cultivating our fields. But how are we to do so if we cannot leave town?" And he concluded by demanding a column with which to get rid of the assailants.

Si-diokí said the same thing and so Ma-n-son yielded.

On the site where the French headquarters is now located, Mori-fin set up a stockading. Nyana-n-koro attacked him there and carried off 1,500 people. He destroyed the stockade and carted off the lumber to Ségou-koura. The situation was becoming desperate, and Ma-n-son, fearing desertions, assembled the slaves and forced them to take an oath of loyalty. Nzan-fato was put in command of the troops; he established a redoubt at Douba-bougou, where he remained for a year, fighting Nyana-n-koro's men who were established in a fortified position not far away. Little by little, Nyana-n-koro's men made progress and forced Nzan-fato to draw back.

At this point, the slaves began to murmur: "Send word to our master that we're at the end of our rope! He or his [79] brother -- what difference does it make to us? Whatever happens, we'll never be any worse off than we are here. We're dying of hunger, while Ma-n-son doesn't care a bit, lives off the fat of the land and keeps his wealth jealously for himself. Tell him that if his behavior doesn't change, we've decided to find out whether Nyana-n-koro is as stingy as he."

Nzan-fato was much disturbed, for there are things which no chief likes to hear. He feared that if he spoke frankly he would arouse Ma-n-son's anger and that Ma-n-son might well think that he, Nzan-fato, had instigated the whole trouble. That is why he sought out Ma-koro and, after telling her what had

*173 happened, offered unassailable proof of his assertions. For this purpose he summoned the principal slaves to a spot where Ma-koro could hear them without being seen and asked them to state their grievances so that he could transmit them to Ma-n-son. Not only did they repeat their complaints, but they also threatened to desert to Nyana-n-koro's side, if satisfaction were not given them within a week.

Ma-koro called Ma-n-son to her and, in his presence, ordered Nzan-fato to tell all he knew. When Ma-n-son realized the imminent danger, he agreed to follow the advice of Ma-koro and Nzan-fato as to what should be done. He gave them the 31 keys to the storerooms, from which they helped themselves generously. Fifteen days later Nyana-n-koro was defeated. On being ejected successively from Ségou-kotra and Ségou-bougou, he fled to Ségou-koro, where dwelt some of the old sofa. However, the city fell three days later and Nyana-n-koro was captured along with his two brothers.

A shoemaker named Moussa quickly brought the news to Ma-n-son that his brothers, Nyana-n-koro, Dyon-kélé and Mamourou, were on their way to him. Ma-n-son ordered that they should not be brought into the city until after nightfall. That night he went to meet the prisoners. Along the road, he sat down under a silk-cotton tree and stopped the little group as it passed. With Nyana-n-koro at the head, the three brothers were walking with their arms tied behind the back under their ample shirts, a single cangue fastening all three together around the neck.

Ma-n-son said: "Nyana-n-koro, I greet you!" There was no reply. "Son of my master!" Still no answer. "Dyara!" Still no answer. "However," Ma-n-son continued, "this [80] is all your fault. It is the justice of Allah that strikes you. If you had captured me, what would you have done with me?"

Dyon-kélé replied: "Absolutely nothing."

Nyana-n-koro was furious and cried: "I should have sacrificed you to 'the drums of the ton-dyon'."

Ma-n-son told Nzan-fato to take his two young brothers to Bama-bougou and put them in chains. As for Nyana-n-koro, he was entrusted to Dyawé Dembélé, the chief of the Somono, with the proviso that Ma-n-son would take Nyan-n-koro back at the proper time. Then Ma-n-son returned to Mpé-ba-la.

*173 One day Nyana-n-koro told Dyawé Dembélé that he wanted to have an interview with his brother Ma-n-son. Both men started out for Mpé-ba-la, Nyana-n-koro having hidden a pistol in his shirt.

Ma-n-son was seated at his threshold. When he saw Dyawé approach, he scented a crisis. He arose, went toward him and asked: "What brings you here?" However, at the very same moment, he espied Nyana-n-koro hiding behind Dyawé and turned toward him. Taken by surprise, Dyawé and Nyana-n-koro were alarmed. Ma-n-son seized his brother by the arm, and the sudden movement made the pistol fall to the ground. Upon seeing it, Ma-n-son called Si-dloki and turned Nyana-n-koro over to him for safekeeping, berating Dyawé severely the while. Si-dloki in turn handed Nyana-n-koro over to a sofa, who took him into the house.

For some time, Ma-n-son seemed completely to have forgotten the affair. A month later he summoned Si-dloki and asked what he had done with Nyana-n-koro.

"I turned him over to a sofa."

The sofa was summoned and claimed to have shut Nyana-n-koro up in a little hut, which he pointed out. They went to the hut and opened it, but nobody was there.

No trace has ever been found of Nyana-n-koro and the little hut has always been "taboo."

Ma-n-son then sent for two of his brothers, Séri and Ba. To Séri he said: "What were you doing while Nyana-n-koro and I were fighting?"

"Cultivating my fields."

"I have no doubt you were; but how could such a struggle have been a matter of indifference to you? Ah, I know! [81] You hoped that we would both be eliminated and that as a result you would have no difficulty in taking over the supreme command. You are nothing but a hypocrite; nevertheless I'll do you no harm, even though you shall never be chief. You have 100 slaves; I forbid you ever to have any more or to do anything other than farm your land."

He made the same disposition of Ba.

*173 He settled both of them at Bama-bougou under the supervision of some ton-dyon'. Both remained members of the Dyara clan, but neither they nor any of their descendants had a right to succeed to power. Then, after reflection, Ma-n-son sent his brother Ba to Déné-bougou, where he had him walled up as punishment for having called him a fool. From then on, Ma-n-son had no enemies to fear in his immediate circle.

At the time of the struggle between Nyana-n-koro and Ma-n-son, Déssé Kouloubali, who hoped to take advantage of the situation, had approached the Niger. Once there, he could not decide which side to take, so he captured the village of Niamina which belonged to Ségou. This was a way of taking revenge for his own captivity in Ségou.

When Ma-n-son was free of further anxiety within his own dominions, he decided to punish Déssé's audacity as well as his indifference to the struggle with Nyana-n-koro. This was his first expedition outside Ségou. He took 60,000 horsemen and 30,000 foot-soldiers as well as his two sons, Da and Tyé-folo.

He summoned Nyényé-koro Boaré and said: "Why did you let my Mar-ka people be captured?"

Nyényé-koro, who was then chief of Mpé-ba-la, replied: "You hadn't entrusted them to me."

In order to show his wrath, Ma-n-son ravaged the entire canton of Missé-ka-la, which was under the direct authority of Nyényé-koro.

At Mori-bougou, he captured a man named Ntyi, whose bravery pleased him. He gave him command of 1,000 men and took him along to Kaarta.

In this province, at Guémou, he had his two sons circumcised.

He pursued the Massa-si with such fury that it has become legendary and, having forced them into a narrow mountain pass, he blocked the way behind them as if to cut off their return. Since Déssé [82] had died in the meantime, the chief of the Massa-si was at the time Moussou-koura Bo.

When he had conquered the Massa-si, Ma-n-son summoned Tyitya, chief of the canton of Dé-dougou (between Bélé-dougou and Foula-dougou), and told him: "You and your people

*173 must leave this country at once. There is not a single grain of millet in Kaarta and I need the resources of your whole canton to provision my troops."

Tyitya's only answer was to forbid Ma-n-son to enter Dé-dougou.

One of Ma-n-son's griot then said: "Master, take care and don't push this Bambara too far, for you know how vindicative the people of our race can be." However, necessity being imperious, Ma-n-son asked Tyitya, in the name of the latter's friendship with Ngolo, to leave his country so that the warriors of Ségou should not die of hunger.

A Bambara loves his village; so Tyitya refused. Three days later, Ma-n-son invaded Dé-dougou. He summoned Tyitya, but the latter informed him: "We cannot come to any agreement. I have consulted my chiefs and they agree unanimously that we shall never yield to a man of our own race."

"I knew," said Ma-n-son," that I could not rely on Tyitya, since he sent 250 men to help Nyana-n-koro. Today the hour of my vengeance is at hand."

Tyitya tried to avoid disaster by offering to provide two baskets of millet for each horseman and one for each foot-soldier and thus to persuade Ma-n-son to abandon his purpose.

"The time for words has passed," said Ma-n-son. "Do you think that a man who can take all will be contented with half?"

Tyitya urged his brothers to emigrate, but they refused. The head village was made ready for defense, and among those who garrisoned the place were 750 light infantry, escorted by 100 musicians. Every exit was blocked and all the men went up onto the roofs of the houses, whence they taunted Ma-n-son and his army.

The next day, Ma-n-son came in person and leaned against the village wall; encouraged by this attitude, his men rushed bravely to the assault. However, the first [83] enemy volley killed 50 sofa chiefs and so the attack was abandoned.

Stockades were erected and a siege from a distance began.

A month passed without any change.

Since the other villages in the canton had been abandoned, the army lived off the country.

*173 A year later, with the winter season at hand, Ma-n-son's twelve wives came to him, saying: "Allow us to leave, for we are homesick for Ségou. If you force us to stay, we shall desert, since we are convinced that you will never take this village."

He called the griot and, in their presence, had the women repeat what they had said. After that, he gave them leave to depart.

During the rest of the night, the griot sang war-songs to Ma-n-son. In the morning, having assembled all his people, he went up to the tata and threw his silver bracelet into it. The assault was terrible; 71 chiefs were killed, including Ntyi of Moribougou. When he saw this brave man fall, Ma-n-son cried out: "All is lost! There is nothing for it but to return to Ségou."

Upon hearing these words, Na-dya Bala, a son of Tonmassa, said to Ma-n-son: "So this foreigner was dearer to you than your faithful followers. It's true that he was courageous, but this was his first campaign, while the rest of us have lost count of them. After all, it's merely one slave the less."

Another year passed. Finally, Ma-n-son's son Da thought of a stratagem. One night, having collected a lot of utensils, he had his people go to the opposite side of the village from that besieged by his father's army. By making an ostensibly muffled noise, he tricked the besieged inhabitants into thinking that a large proportion of the assailants was deserting. The village gates opened at once for people who thought that an opportune time to escape had come.

Da and his men, who were strategically placed, entered the village, where shouting and firing soon alerted the army to the success of the stratagem. For 15 days carnage prevailed in the village, but the chief remained hidden. Thereupon, Na-dya Bala went to Ma-n-son and told him: "I swear that I shall either bring Tyitya to you tomorrow or die in the attempt." As the price for his life, [84] Ma-n-son gave him 100 scarlet shirts, 100 scarlet silk cords -- in a word, 100 of everything he desired. The next day at sundown Na-dya Bala brought in Tyitya. "Many thanks, Dembélé [sic]!" cried Ma-n-son and further gave him 750 people "to repair the rents in his shirt." Later he added 1,000 people and 400 villages.

*173 Ma-n-son returned to Ségou, capturing Béba en route.

One day Ma-n-son summoned Dyira-ba, saying: "I know that, at the time of my quarrel with my brother Nyana-n-koro, you were living sometimes at Ségou-koro and sometimes at Ségou-koura and you never came to see me so as to avoid taking sides with one or the other of us." "I'm poor," said Dyira-ba, "and I didn't want to add to your discord." "That is to say, you enjoyed watching the decline of power of the Ngolo-la and you hoped, on the contrary, to see a resurgence of that of the Dounamba-a. However, I shan't do you any harm, first, because you are my father and also out of respect for the memory of my mother and grandmother. But to punish you, I shall take Nango and Massala away from you. You need only a few men to do your farming."

Ma-n-son gave Mpé-ba-la and Bama-bougou to Da. He placed Tyé-folo at Koké with 6,000 men. To Nyéné-m-ba he gave the command of Oïtala, including all that had formerly belonged to Dyon-kolo, and he strengthened Nyéné's force of 13,000 men by an addition of 4,000. He installed Sibiri and Nyanya at Diani with 10,000 men each. Fissa was placed at Nango with all of Dyiri-ba's slaves, except 400 who were left to Dyiri-ba. He assigned Songo-ba to Massa-la and Nyanya-ni-ntyéni to Séou (on the left bank).

After he had settled all these matters, Ma-n-son summoned Mamari from Kirango.

"I should like to buy your village," he said to him.

"Your father also wanted to do so," said Mamari, "and he offered in payment as many cowries as I could put in my tata. I refused because it was not I who built the village; it was left to me by my father and he inherited it from his ancestors. Now, as you know, a Bambara does not give up the village of his ancestors in return for cowries. Ask of me what you will, except that."

[85] "In a week I shall come to see you and we shall try to come to an agreement," said Ma-n-son.

Well before this interview, as soon as he had got wind of Ma-n-son's intentions, Mamari had persuaded his people to build new villages, mostly on the left bank of the Niger, such as

*173 Vélingué-ra, Gou-ma, Médi-na, Tyon, and Tayon. On his return from Ségou, he sent all his people to these new villages so that, a week later when Ma-n-son arrived, he found only Mamari at Kirango, who replied as follows to his proposals:

"I simply cannot sell the property of my ancestors; but, if you insist, I will give it to you."

"I couldn't possibly accept because my enemies would say that I had extorted it from you."

"Have no fear, I shall keep the whole affair secret."

Ma-n-son accepted and Mamari hastened to leave Kirango and go to Vélingué-ra to live.

On the eighth day, Kala-bé reached Kirango with 10,000 men to garrison the place.

When he heard about the evacuation of Kirango, Ma-n-son summoned the Sisé and the Khomma people from Sansanding. "Why didn't you come to greet me at Kirango?" he asked.

"You didn't even spend the night there," they replied, "and we shouldn't have had time to get there before your departure."

"You're nothing but hypocrites. When I was fighting with my brother, Nyana-n-koro, you supplied him with men and provisions and you didn't even acknowledge me."

He ordered them to bring in all of the heads of households at Sansanding; 3,500 of them came. He decided to put them to death, but sherif Ismail intervened. Ma-n-son deferred the carrying out of his wishes and turned the men over to So, the leader of his slaves. However, he changed his mind the next day and had them all brought to the public square to be executed. Sherif Ismail once more interceded and Ma-n-son gave in, saying: "All right, I give them to you as slaves." Thus, they all returned to Sansanding.

Souleyman, chief of Dina, came to Ségou to pay his respects to Ma-n-son. He presented him with 35 pirogue-loads of cowries. Ma-n-son could not refuse this gift but he was [86] deeply humiliated by it, since he understood perfectly that Souleyman had deliberately intended to show that he could give without counting. Ma-n-son swore to get his revenge.

*173 At Ségou, Souleyman was easily led to indulge in his well-known penchant for strong drink and, in an alcoholic stupor, he continually went around shouting that Ségou was just a land of slaves where he alone could do as he wished. These taunts enraged Ma-n-son.

One day, in the course of a drinking-bout, Souleyman got involved in a quarrel with a man named Siné-dyan, one of Ma-n-son's slaves or griot. During lunch, to amuse Ma-n-son, Siné-dyan told of his quarrel with Souleyman. Ma-n-son perceived that advantage might be gained from the affair and told Siné-dyan: "I should be delighted to have you make something of this ridiculous quarrel, but it has to be understood that I mustn't appear in it. As Souleyman is my mother's guest, he is sacred for me."

Siné-dyan returned to the public square and there found Souleyman drinking with Na-dya Bala, son of Ton-massa. He approached and said: "You, grandson of the brave Ton-massa, and you, grandson of the valiant Wara, you two are well suited to enjoying each other's company and celebrating together. If you like, I offer you 1,000 forked sticks and 2,000 straw mats to build a spacious room where you can be comfortable and enjoy life."

They accepted.

In order to meet the extraordinary expenses of these orgies, Na-dya Bala sold 7500 (1) slaves at Ségou and used the

1. As noted earlier, these figures have no relevance.

proceeds to buy beer (dlo). For the same purpose, Souleyman had as much sent from home as he could and, when his resources ran short, secretly took flight and returned to Dina.

Thereupon Na-dya Bala sought out Nzan-fato, told him what had happened and persuaded him to accompany him to see Ma-n-son. When Na-dya Bala had set forth his complaints to the latter, he concluded: "It is my opinion that such conduct deserves severe punishment. I ask you to pursue this coward who, after coming here to parade his wealth and humiliate us, has now fled secretly to avoid paying his share."

*173 Publicly, Ma-n-son opposed Na-dya Bala's project [87] but as soon as the young man had withdrawn he sent word to his mother, Ma-koro.

"Nzan-fato and Na-dya Bala," he said, "have decided to pursue Souleyman, and I cannot oppose them. However, since I have no interest in the affair, warn Souleyman and advise him to leave the country in order to forestall an irreparable misfortune. After that, we shall see."

Ma-koro summoned one of her trusted followers and gave him a pair of sandals, a white shirt and a skin bag full of couscous. She gave him careful instructions and told him to go along the river and to return by a different route so as not to meet Nzan-fato, who would surely give him trouble.

Ma-koro's envoy found Souleyman dancing and drinking. With great difficulty he managed to get him aside and, after delivering Ma-koro's message, said: "Put on these sandals and this blouse, take the skin on your shoulder, and emigrate. That's the wisest course; later, everything will work out."

Souleyman refused to leave the country of his ancestors.

During this time, Nzan reached Massa-la, the last village of the slaves of Ségou. There he held council and authorized his people to seize and to keep anything that fell into their hands in the country to the west into which they were to go. It was then for the first time that the griot sang: "In the shade of the leafy kaminya, the hen can't tell a grain of sand from a grain of millet."

Nzan's troops ravaged everything in their path and advanced rapidly upon Dina. When they reached Dina, Nzan set up his camp near the village and summoned Souleyman. The latter came, accompanied by his brothers, among them Na-dyé Kassoum who, three years earlier, had proposed to Nzan to betray Souleyman.

Opening the interview, Nzan said: "I shall begin by telling you, Souleyman, that we are here in spite of Ma-n-son. You indulged in extraordinary orgies at Ségou with Na-dya Bala, my son (1). Aren't you, a freeman, ashamed to have consorted

1. Not through natural filiation but due to friendly relations which had existed between Nzan and Na-dya Bala's father.

+173 with a slave and then to have decamped without paying your due?

"That's why we are here."

[88] "At Ségou you ran out of resources, but here you lack for nothing, and the matter must be settled.

"In order to show you that he has no part in this affair, Ma-n-son has instructed me to give you 20 boxes of guns, 10 loads of flints, 10 loads of bullets and some loads of salt and dried fish (1)."

1. Ma-n-son's conduct is a typical example of Bambara trickery.

Souleyman accepted Ma-n-son's gift and, after expressing thanks, added: "Since you and Na-dya Bala have come to have a drinking-bout, tell me what I should do."

"Let's do as we did at Ségou."

"No, we won't find here what is to be found at Ségou. Besides, I have a suspicion that you have come only to make war. I can't oppose you since my people are away; if you want to seize me, I can't prevent you."

"Well, set a time-limit after which we shall attack you, whether your people are back or not."

He asked for three days and his request was granted. On the fourth day Nzan attacked the village, which was defended on one side by Souleyman and on the other by Na-dyé Kassoum. The latter opened the gates to Nzan. Souleyman was captured by Na-dya Bala and killed at the foot of a caillcedra tree [Khaya senegalensis] in the village. Na-dyé Kassoum and the prisoners were sent to Ségou.

On his way back to Ségou, Nzan took Toumboulou and the chiefs of Damba, Kamikon, Kani-ké-dougou, Dyala-bougou and Séou.

When he reached Ségou, he posted a warning against freemen consorting with slaves.

As a reward, Ma-n-son gave Nzan 10,000 people and made Kassoum chief of the canton of Dina with headquarters at Kerké-la.

*173 When he was stricken with an incurable case of diarrhea, Ma-n-son realized that the end was near. He gathered his sons around him and advised them to remain united. Then he expressed his regrets at having been unable to take Koré-Samba-Nya-na and Bouba-n-koro. He regretted too, that he had not succeeded in subjugating Ma Dyala Da-tou, which had boasted that it would make Ma-koro's couscous taste bitter.

Ma-n-son had fought against Macina and Tombo, against the Touareg [Tuareg] and the Mossi, and had been successful against them all. During his reign, the country of Ségou proper (the to-da, "pot of gruel") extended as follows: on the east as far as and including the canton of Saro; on the north to the vicinity of [90] Ségué-la, Kourouma and Kokri; on the west to Kanga-ba; and on the south to Mpé-so-ba and Yanga-so.

The authority of the chief of Ségou was widespread but highly precarious, since there were not enough organized troops to enforce it. The tributary villages were supposed to pay more or less regular dues, whose nature and amount had been fixed when they were conquered.

Da (1808-1827). On the eighth day after Ma-n-son's burial, Da assembled his brothers and, addressing Tyé-folo, asked what they were planning to do. Tyé-folo kept silence, but young Kala-ké, proud at being consulted, wanted to speak. Da forbade him and once more inquired of Tyé-folo.

"What shall we do with our father's wives?"

"Nothing could be simpler," quickly replied Kala-ké, whom Da tried in vain to silence." First, Ma should be set aside as she was our father's principal wife. Tyé-folo can take your mother, Yo; and you can take Tyé-folo's mother."

"You are talking nonsense!" shouted Da, out of patience.

"But I'm only answering your question."

"Da," said Tyé-folo, "do as you like."

"Very well," concluded Da, "neither our mothers nor Ma and Koma will be taken by just anyone. With that settled, let's leave it there for the present."

When all was arranged, Da again summoned his brothers and told them through his griot, Tyé-tigué Bani-nyéni:

*173 "As far as I am concerned, I ask as inheritance only my father's bow and arrows."

"Well, take them," exclaimed the irrepressible Kala-ké, "since you are our eldest brother and since we have no wish to quarrel, as did our father and his brothers."

"All right," replied Da through his griot, "but don't forget that you must keep our father's death secret and act just as you did when he was alive. This is indispensable for the success of my plans."

The fact was that Bani, the chief of Samba Nya-na, had remained invincible only because of the precious amulets [91] he possessed against Ma-n-son. These magic powers naturally would not work against Da; so if Da were able to attack Bani before the latter heard of Ma-n-son's death and was thus forewarned, Da would unquestionably triumph. This was all the more likely in view of the fact that Da had asked a marabout friend of his for a victory talisman. In order to prepare this talisman, the marabout required one of Bani's sandals and some hair from his beard.

In order to obtain these indispensable ingredients, Da bribed with gold a pretty woman, who went to Samba Nya-na with all the necessary instructions.

As soon as Bani saw the pretty woman, he begged persistently for her favors. When she had yielded, she made use of his confidence to get him drunk. Thus she easily obtained what she had come for, and the talisman could be made.

Now the remarkable thing is that, though Bani had always been forewarned by the people of Dina every time Ma-n-son was about to attack him, Da's approach so took him by surprise that he learned of it only when the enemy was before the village gates. This was the work of the magic talisman.

The village was taken and Bani, trying to flee on horseback, was captured by the griot, So-touma. Now Bani had auburn hair, one of those men whom the Bambara call Gen-bilé; they believe that if they put a red-haired man to death they incur the most frightful misfortunes. That is why Da merely removed Bani to Digon, where he died. [82]

*173 When he had returned to Ségou, Da asked for a column to be led against Fon-ba-na, near Sikasso; this town was taken.

He destroyed Dya-kourou-ma, near Sansanding, because its chief was called Toto, a name which he disliked. He seized Toto's son and made him take a new name.

He captured Da-tou and put him to death.

"What have I done to you?" said Da-tou.

"You once said that you'd make Ma-koro's couscous taste bitter. I am proving that, on the contrary, you will make it taste good!"

On his return to Ségou, Da received a visit from Douga-koro, of Koré, who had come to pay him respects.

"Thanks for your visit," Da said to him, "old men are the [92] remedy of the young, and it just happens that I have some information to ask of you. Do you know of any villages in the Miniankala region which my father did not succeed in capturing?"

"No, I know of none; and, if there were any, I'm sure it would only be because he did not wish to take them."

"Come now, think it over!" and Da started to talk to other visitors. Douga-koro, much upset, asked leave to retire to his host's house in order to reflect. However, as soon as he was outside, he started for his village to warn the people of the imminent arrival of Da.

On the eighth day after this interview, Da summoned the chief of the Somono and ordered him to make all arrangements for a strong column to cross the Bani; with this purpose in view, the pirogues had to go down the Niger to Mopti and then up the Bani to the desired place.

Da destroyed Koré and killed Douga-koro. He made Douga-
[551] koro's son prisoner and gave him the name M-fa-ni-moné-té-koun' (My father's soul no longer suffers), to which the reply was Den'-nyouma (good son). In the same way he had given Bani's son the name Malo-bora-m-fa-la (My father is no longer ashamed), with the reply Den'-nyouma (good son) (1).

1. This method of naming slaves was very common. See Les Khassonké [The Kasonke], p. 344.

*173 Da's subjects called him Ton-komo.

Tradition has it that Ton-komo continued to fight. Particularly, he captured Ntélé, chief of the village of Koté-mabougou in the canton of Bani-n-ko; Moussa Mariko, chief of Farko-la (Bani-n-ko); and Morbou, a Peul of Dénè-naa, near Sokolo. He led a column against the Mossi, captured the country, and there founded three villages: Ségou-koro, Banan-koro and Mpé-ba-la.

When this last column had returned, Da decided to build a house at Banan-koro so as to leave a lasting monument to his reign, and 1,500 men were employed in the construction. During this period, Da maintained very close relations with one of his childhood friends, a Marka named Mama Dyétoura, who was a son of the chief of Tyén near Sansanding.

Mama was very powerful and very rich. Although he was a Moslem, he wore his hair long and braided and, out of vanity, ornamented it with pretty silver bangles. A handsome man, he was a favorite of all the ladies. Now, one [93] day when he was chatting with Da in the house under construction at Banan-koro, Da's wives came up and all of them marvelled at Mama's charms. Da took offense and, after he had returned home, summoned his wives one by one to find out what it was they so much admired about Mama. Each one replied: "You are the bravest of chiefs, but Mama is the handsomest of men."

Da was devoured with jealousy and ordered Mama to shave his head, ostensibly in conformity with Moslem law. Mama obeyed, but the ladies liked him just as well. Sensing danger he discarded all his elaborate clothes and never appeared before Da except when he was bareheaded and bedraggled like a poor man.

However, Da thought him still too popular with the ladies and one day told him: "Mama, I want you to wear a donkey's mane." "Very well," said Mama, "I'll speak to my father about it." Mama went to the house of his father who, at the very same time, received a golden razor from Da with orders to leave only a donkey's mane on his son's head. Shortly thereafter the old man, who was already ill, died without having carried out the instructions. Henceforth free, Mama refused to accept the humiliation required by Da.

#173 Da summoned the sofa leader, one Mpé-ba-la So, gave him 5,000 barrels of powder, and commanded him to capture Mama, to shave his head like a donkey's mane and to put on his forehead the cowrie shell which was the sign of an adulterous slave.

The sofa was beaten and, fearful of the master's wrath, took refuge at Togou with the marabout Kassoum, who undertook to intercede with Da. Da pardoned him, saying: "Let him return. He's been beaten, but that doesn't matter; I have lots of other slaves who will do what he failed to do."

He sent Dyogo Dyara, who was beaten too, but was also forgiven, thanks to the good offices of a freeman of Ségou-koro.

At that point, Da sent word to the slaves living at Baga-ma-bougou that the man who succeeded in carrying out the mission against Mama would receive 10,000 slaves as a reward. But the people of Baga-ma-bougou chased Da's envoy out of town without even listening to him.

When this envoy, whose name was Ma-nyouma, returned, a griot came and sat before Da's door and sang the whole night through; a blacksmith who was seated on the threshold of the [94] opposite house, followed suit. The next day Da went in person to Banan-koro, spent the night there and, at dawn, attacked Mama, only to be beaten in his turn. Sadly he headed back to Ségou, but when he heard the griot slyly sing: "Mama has broken Komo's antlers," he was filled with shame and turned back to renew his attack on Mama's village. He reached the village at nightfall and, on the advice of his intimates, resigned himself to postponing his undertaking until morning.

Da attacked at dawn but was unsuccessful and sustained heavy losses. He then decided to starve the village out, so he surrounded it from a distance, building stockades and then, worn out with repeated failures, he turned over the siege to his brother Kala-hé and himself returned to Ségou.

For a period of six months, Da showed no further signs of activity. Then he summoned the son of Bon-gué and the son of Bakari and sent these two Peul off to Mama in the greatest secrecy to ask him to forget the past and to come and take an oath of friendship.

*173 The two young men departed in the greatest anxiety; knowing Da, they were sure that their mission could only spell disaster for Mama and they were very fond of him. Therefore, they were very happy when he told them that he knew Da too well to trust his word.

However, Da refused to give up his new strategy and sent successively a number of freemen, who might be supposed to have enough influence to help his plan.

He finally learned that one Bala of Séga-la was the only man with enough influence over Mama to persuade him. At first, Bala refused to have any part in Da's plan, which he judged to be a trick, but gradually he allowed himself to be convinced of Da's sincerity in desiring a reconciliation, which Da knew how to affect. Bala then left to see Mama, convinced that he was working for the latter's best interests. When Mama saw him, he realized that further resistance was impossible since even Bala had yielded to Da's hypocritical persuasion; so it was with sinking heart that he agreed to accompany his friend to the village of the tyrant. However, before he left, he urged his brother to keep a sharp lookout and not to yield if he should fail to return.

[95] Da was encamped at Koungo-bougou and he had placed two wings of his column between his camp and Mama's village. The warriors in these sections were slaves devoted to Da, and Mama promptly called this fact to his friend's attention. As the two men advanced, the slaves became more and more hostile. The first ones had greeted them, but a little further on, they demanded various gifts, especially tobacco. Still further on, slaves pulled at their garments from right and left and, finally, a man lying on the ground near the path caught Mama by the leg and tripped him. He fell and at once the warriors set upon him and beat him to death. Bala, unable to resist the attack, ran up to Da who, when he saw him coming, went into his hut; but he came out again.

Bala came up, shouting insults, spitting in his face and saying: "I swear I shall never again pronounce words containing the syllable da, nor ever again eat anything whose name has the syllable da!" Bala and his descendants have never violated this oath. He crossed the river and never again set foot in Ségou.

*173 Da spent eleven more months in destroying Mama's village. Once installed there, in a spot which had cost him such great effort, Da felt that he was at the apogée of his power.

It is said that one day, in an access of mad pride, he told his griot:

"It is I who surpass in power all of Ma-n-son's children, and Ma-n-son himself accomplished very little compared to what I have done. Go and find out whether the tribute has arrived from Fouta."

"They have come," the griot reported back.

"And from Sahel?"

"They are here too."

"And from Egypt?"

"It appears that the men bringing them are at present at Samsanding."

"I have heard that a certain Mokhtar is fighting up north. Has his tribute arrived?"

"It is at Séga-la."

[98] "And what about the people who wear queues and who live on the other side of the forest of kola trees?"

"Their envoys are at Kogou."

And thus Da enjoyed making boast of his power.

One day he confided to his intimates: "I doubt if I can find any more victims for my Komo and I feel capable of taking on the companions of the prophet."

Sherif Ismail's son, Lamine, appalled by such heresy and such a display of pride, explained: "Take care! Such words always bring disaster."

"That's all right," said Da, "meanwhile I'm going to establish a village of white men (1)."

1. That is, of people reputed to be of non-Negroid origin.

In order to carry out this project, he forcibly settled the Marka of Tinéni-m-ba at Banan-koro, and placed between Koukoukourou and Djenné 200 heads of Bozo families. His horsemen

*173 rounded up all the Bozo people settled on the Niger from Dina to Kanga-ba and moved them to Banan-koro.

Further, he captured 40,000 cattle on the shore of Lake Débo and divided them into 30 herds, which he entrusted to his Peul.

He had Tyan Mana, chief of Saro, gather up all of the Dioula [Diula] people settled at Kaya, at Koro-dougou, at Toun and at Komina (Bani-n-ko) and forced them to move to Banan-koro.

All at once, Da felt very ill. He sent for alfa Seydou Konnaté, a learned marabout of Sansanding, and asked him what he should do to get well.

"I can tell you only three things," said the alfa. "I warned you not to kill an only son, but you did so. During this very year a man will arise who will put an end to your power. Finally, and in spite of your wishes, your son Tyé-koura will not succeed you; the power will pass to one of his brothers. As for the illness with which you have been stricken, you will never recover." And with that he departed.

Four months after these predictions, the revolt of Ahmadou Bari broke out. The chief of Kouna-ri, Guéladyo Ahmadou-bodédyo, sent word to Da: "One of our marabouts is preaching a holy war and the people of Djenné are asking for help." In the first battle 7,000 men from [97] Banan-koro and Mpé-ba-la were killed, along with the Gon-bilé chief who commanded them. Da then gave special instructions to Salirou, chief of Saro, whose country, because of these events, was now the frontier of Ségou.

Three years after this first battle, Da abandoned his bow.

Tyé-folo (1827-1839). Tyé-koura, Da's son, lived at Mpé-ba-la, and the slaves surrounding him were determined to prevent anyone else from taking power, saying: "Our master's son is the only one who should command." Nao, the sofa leader, was especially active in promoting this view.

For eight months the slaves had a riotous time spending their late master's estate. They had forbidden anyone to pronounce the name of Tyé-folo and, indeed, even the word Tyé was outlawed.

*173 One day the sofa of Ségou-koro and of Ségou-Sikoro sent for Tyé-folo, who was then living at Kokô. He came in a hurry and was taken to his brother's house. He sent for Nso; when the latter arrived he found the door guarded by 750 sofa and he noticed in the three entrance rooms the guards were lying face downwards with axes in their hands.

Suddenly, Tyé-folo appeared before him in the middle of the court, all dressed in white and wearing a cow's tail hanging from his wrist, while all prostrated themselves around him. Nso joined the throng and took up the same position, crying: "Dyara!"

"You are the one who is the Dyara," replied Tyé-folo, "since you've been in authority for eight months and since you want your master's son for your chief."

"Ah yes!" exclaimed the clever rogue, "I want the son of my master to be chief, and you are my master's son, for I've known no other master than Ma-n-son."

"Very well," said Tyé-folo, "I give you 240,000 cowries with which you can celebrate, but first tell me where Tyé-koura is."

"I don't know, for he has fled."

Tyé-koura had indeed fled, seeing the direction events were taking, and had taken refuge with the Somono chief, whom he begged to intercede for him. Tyé-folo pardoned him, saying: "This child is not guilty, [98] since the whole affair is the fault only of the people of Ségou who thought to stir up discord between us so as to profit from our dissension."

Up to the time of his death, Tyé-folo continued the war against Sheik Ahmadou Bari.

Further, he captured Tinêni-m-ba and Têmên-kou.

He died under mysterious circumstances.

Nyêné-m-ba (1839). A brother of Tyé-folo and living at Oïtala, he ruled for only nine months.

Period of Anarchy
(1840-1843)

The death of Nyêné-m-ba ushered in a period of anarchy which the people of Macina sought to exploit for the purpose of

*173 subjugating the country of Ségou. However, the Peul, Bakari, a son of Dyan and chief of a group of the Fur-ba Fla-u, succeeded in gaining control of the ton-dyon' and held off the invaders led by a certain Blissi.

Bakari Dyan killed Blissi (1) and took numerous villages,

1. See the story of this event in Chapter 7.

notably Bélén-n-ko; the booty taken from these places paid for the orgies at Ségou.

The Dyara
(following)

Bén (1843-1849), called Kirango Bén. Finally, Tyé-folo's brother Bén, who lived at Kirango, was chosen.

There arose discord between Bén and Nko-n-tyé, father of Nto, which later on degenerated into an armed fight between Nto and Bén's son Kara-moro. The quarrel arose when Nko-n-tyé said to Bén: "If you do such and such a thing, you will surpass me." Now such a remark was only acceptable between equals and so Bén, who was seriously annoyed by this familiarity, loudly severed relations with Nko-n-tyé.

One day Bén quarreled with a slave named Bougari; the latter fled, pursued by Bén, who was armed [99] with a spear. Bougari sought to put himself under the protection of a powerful chief and, meeting Bakari Dyan, asked him to intercede in his favor. Bén came up at that moment and threw his spear. Bakari Dyan was wounded and the slave killed.

Bén captured Mourdia.

He attacked Kourou-ma but was beaten back. A marabout advised him to cease his warlike activities, saying: "If you resume them, you will die."

"Very well, then," he said, "I'll die, since in any case I shouldn't be able to survive the disgrace of failing to take this village." He took it and died.

*173 Bén had ruled for eight years and two months.

Kon-maran (1849-1851). This was another of Bén's brothers and he ruled for seven or eight months.

Démba (1851-1854). This new chief conquered Birgo, Wassoulou and Gana-dougou. He died after three years and one month of authority.

Touro-koro Mari (1854-1856). Hardly had he been elected by the ton-dyon when this son of Ma-n-son's went off to war and took Gamon in the province of Wassoulou. After that, he attacked Dyéidi Sidibé, chief of Sogoni, and took 8,000 prisoners in two battles.

He attacked Koulou-koro (Koulikoro) in order to capture Bagui Ngolo Dyara, but the latter managed to escape and to reach Bélé-dougou.

The villages of Dyali-ba and Dya-n-ké-na in the Mandé country likewise fell into his power.

Touro-koro Mari quarreled simultaneously with the people of Ségou and with his brother Kégué Mari, who lived at Massa-la. He ordered an attack on Massa-la, but both the besieged and attackers fired blank cartridges and, when Touro-koro Mari expressed astonishment at seeing no one wounded, a slave replied: "We've had enough of your fratricidal wars; they will have to stop." The matter rested there.

One day Touro-koro Mari sent for his son Ba-dyi. He dressed him in Ma-n-son's garments, ordered all the troops to accompany him and told him to attack Ségou. The people of Ségou became alarmed at this seemingly senseless performance. [100] To this discontent was added the fact that Touro-koro Mari gave valuable gifts to El Hadj Omar and sent one of his sons to Omar to be educated.

Finally, one Thursday evening, all the sofa left Touro-koro Mari's house, only 40 hila-koro remaining behind. Touro-koro Mari's sons, who were playing nearby, were frightened by these preparations and took refuge among the Somono.

During the evening the slaves returned. They tied a scarf around Touro-koro Mari's neck and dragged his body outside. Kégué-Mari was summoned; in his presence Touro-koro Mari was

*173 dragged successively through all of the roads leading into Ségou and, finally, to Komo's forest. There Kégué-Mari said to him: "I have not forgotten that you had me tied up here, accusing me of adultery with one of your wives, nor that, as a punishment for the alleged crime, you forced me to eat grass and leaves. Remember, on that day I told you that even though I were lying on the ground, if I could touch you with my foot, I would lay you low. Now my time of vengeance has come. Ségou will be so ruined by you that peace will never return."

Then a stone was tied around Touro-koro Mari's neck and his body was thrown into the river.

Ali (1856-1861). Ali, a brother of Touro-koro Mari, was then summoned in these terms: "Come, for the key was mislaid while we were engaged in a certain little intrigue." "I shan't come," he replied, "for I know very well how you lost the key." "Very well," said they. "We killed your brother because he wanted to force us to become Moslems and also because he wasted the state's substance on expensive presents to the marabouts."

Ali's only adversary was El Hadj Omar. In order to circumvent an invasion by the people of Fouta-n-ké, he combined forces with the chief of Macina but failed to conclude a reliable alliance, and this failure was one of the causes of the downfall both men.

After his son Tata had been defeated at Oïtala, Ali himself was defeated in 1861 at Tio, near Sansanding, even though he was supported by an army from Macina. As a result of these victories, El Hadj Omar entered Ségou on March 10, 1861. Ali retired to Macina, whither he returned with a sizable army to attack Ségou. However, he [101] was ultimately beaten at Kogou and then went to settle at Touna on the right bank of the Bani.

After being attacked and defeated at Touna, Ali fled to Massina, where he was captured and put to death by El Hadj Omar in 1862.

The Bamara next chose Kégné Mari, Ali's brother, for their chief. From 1862 to 1870 he constantly harrassed the people of Fouta. He had returned to Touna to live.

*173 From 1870 to 1878, Nyéné-n-ba kept up a running fight with his predecessors' partisans after settling at Samba-la, not far from Touna.

Mamourou, who ruled for only a few days, was succeeded by Kara-moko, who had no fixed residence and who was plagued by serious family squabbles. Being unable to come to any sort of agreement with his cousins Togoma and Ma-n-son, both sons of Tyé-folo, he had them poisoned. He was himself poisoned in 1887.

175 When Colonel Archinard entered Ségou on April 6, 1890, he summoned Kara-moko's successor and gave him authority over the natives under the direction of a French resident, Captain Hunderberg. However, Mari Dyara, who had accepted this role, secretly organized a plot to assassinate the resident and thus put an end to our control. This treason was punished as it deserved: Mari was shot by the army.

Massa-si Bo-dyan was then called to occupy the post, but former hatred made his position untenable. Direct administration henceforth appeared to be the only possible solution to safeguard our interests.

[102]

*173 Genealogical Table of the Chiefs of the Clan of Ségou
(1660-1861)

The Koulouhali
Barama-Ngolo
|
Soma
|
fa Siné
|
Mamari, called Biton
(1660-1710)

Bakari	Dé-koro	(Dyon-kolo)
1710	1711-1736	

*173

The Ton-dyon'

Ton-massa Dembélé
1736-1740

Kanou-ba-nyouma Bari
1740-1744

Kafa-dyougou
1744-1748

Period of Anarchy
1748-1750

The Dyara

Ngolo Dyara
1787-1808 [sic; probably 1750-1787]

Ma-n-son
1787-1808

Nyana-n-koro

Da.....
1808-1827

Tyé-folo.....
1827-1839

Nyéné-m-ba.....
1839

Period of Anarchy.....
1840-1843

Bén .....
1843-1849

Kou-Maran.....
1849-1851

Démba.....
1851-1854

Touro-koro Mari.....
1854-1856

Ali.....
1856-1861

[103]

History of the Empire of Kaarta

The Descendants of Nya Ngolo

*173 Sounsan (1). When Sounsan and his people had crossed the Niger with the help of the poyon', they proceeded in the direction of Lamballaré (2). There, at the village of Darigo, Sounsan

1. As we shall see, the given name marks some event connected with the person's birth. [55] [845] It is common practice, when the delivery is difficult, to hang a rabbit's foot at the mother's side, hence the name Sounsan ("rabbit" in Bambara). The name Péné, used elsewhere, has the same etymology.

Sounsan is said to have practiced the saddle-maker's trade at Kounando. *173 564 It is told how one day he went with a kulé (a native carpenter) into the country to get some wood needed for a saddle. At one point the two became separated. The kulé found some honey and ate it, only to be taken sick. He threw up the honey on some stones and then went away. Soon after, Sounsan passed the spot and, seeing the honey, picked it up and ate it. When, on his way back, he learned how the honey happened to be there, he was so disgusted and cursed the kulé so roundly that, since that time, none of his people can touch a kulé with impunity. All members of that caste are thus tne (taboo) for that branch of the Kouloubali.

[103] 2. In the Soninké language, this is the name of the region watered by a swamp

*173
103

(lambe, in the local dialect) which, south of Ouossébougou, has its source near Dongué and ends in a pool at Ouaba. In Soninké, "Lambaliaré" means literally "on the edge of a watercourse," and the Bambara use "Kodala" in the same sense. In Soumsan's day, this was a small canton ruled by the Soninké of Darigo, a village called Douabougou (market) by the Bambara and situated on one of the branches of the Segabala (of the maps), a tributary of the Baoulé.

According to Raffenel (Vol. I, p. 365), the Soninké village was called Baïko, a name unknown to me and one which seems likely to have resulted from a mishearing of the name Darigo. In any case, its identification with Bammako, as proposed by Raffenel, is unacceptable.

*173 accepted the hospitality of a blacksmith, fa Siné Dyara, asking the latter's protection from probable pursuit by Barama Ngolo. Fa Siné was poor but he is said to have understood the language of the birds and, at the very moment when he was talking to Soumsan, a passing bird told him that powerful chiefs would descend from his guest. That is why he said to Soumsan: "I'm a poor man, but I'll do all I can for you and your descendants. In return, I ask that you promise -- for yourself and for them -- these things: first, that you never kill nor imprison any of my people; then [104] that, every time the head of your family changes, a wife and a horse belonging to the dead man be given to the head of my family."

[695] They swore on a copper anvil which was thrown into a well, and after that fa Siné told Soumsan where he was to settle.

Soumsan was still closely allied to some of the Taraoré, whose descendants now live in the Diangounté area. They gave him a wife named Dougo (1), who was the mother of his son Massa.

1. According to another version, Dougo

*173

was given to Sounsan by the Peul of Massa-la when he spent some time among them with his father. According to Adam's account, Dougo belonged to the Koïta family but that would not prevent the family from being called Taraoré also, since that name is frequently borrowed as a mark of distinction, particularly among converts to Islam.

Further, he had a blood pact with one Kassi Konaré (or Konoré), who was a fugitive from Tamato in the Kala region as a result of family troubles (2).

2. Kassi is the ancestor of the Konaré called Kala-n-ka-u, that is, natives of Kala. Raffenel calls them Khonoré and Kala-ngou, terms borrowed from the Soninké people.

The Taraoré lived by armed pillage and they interested Sounsan and Kassi in their operations; booty captured jointly was divided into three equal shares.

At this time, Massa, Sounsan's son, was a strong, daring and courageous young man. He lived in the constant company of the "young men" (kama-len'-u) of Darigo and, above all, he never missed one of their raids. Indeed, oftener than not, he was the instigator and leader of their expeditions. So it was that one day he raided the village of Fallou, where he captured 25 persons and as a reward for his "luck," chose a boy named Siné Taraoré to become his first slave.

At ordinary times, Massa went hunting and never failed to share his game with his companions. Further, following his father's example, he was skillful at making and repairing saddles. Here too his qualities were much appreciated by the young men, who often told him: "We will do anything you command to show our devotion to you."

Massa told his father about these remarks, and the old man, shaking his head, said: "That is only flattery with a purpose.

*173 Still, if you think your friends are sincere, [165] have them swear on our idol Nko, which is wrapped in a monkey-skin -- have them swear that, if need be, they will not hesitate to fight even their own parents if you require it. Then, if they break their word, Nko will kill them."

So the young men swore on Nko to be loyal to Massa and his cause.

One day Massa led them in an attack on Sanou-ba Mamari Dyara at Fala-da-la, near Niamala in the canton of Lamballaré. The expedition brought back 18 slaves, of whom Mama took as his share, for "luck," one called Dyan-Koro-ba Dembélé.

Soumsan felt uncomfortable as a foreigner in the Soninké village of Darigo and so one day he confided to fa Sinè: "I have decided to settle with my people at the place called Tomo-na (1)

1. Tomonda on the maps.

and I am going to build a house there."

The young men joined Massa in undertakings which, begun rather uncertainly, soon took on quite another aspect. Calling attention to the abundance of the harvest, Massa had no trouble convincing his friends that she tom' needed a safe place to store their resources: "For the people we are going to rob are quite capable of uniting against us, and then how would we resist them?"

So it was that, on the advice of his father, old Soumsan, Massa built a high and strong palisade surrounded by a deep moat and enclosing a virtually unassailable redoubt. This place was called Sinsa-ro (lit., "within the palisade") and also Soumsan-na (lit., "at Soumsan's"). (2).

2. A tradition reported by Raffenel calls it Kéniédougou (Vol. 1, p. 386).

One day there arrived from Kong a caravan of 740 slaves carrying guns and powder. Led by Marka merchants, the slaves were tied in pairs with ropes around their necks. It was the habit

*173 of the caravan leaders to entrust the slaves to the village chief at each halt and to remain outside the walls themselves to watch over their other merchandise. On its way to Darigo, the caravan stopped at Sounsan-na.

Since Sounsan was by now old and living very quietly, he turned over to Massa [106] the care of housing these transients. Massa invited the caravan leaders to lock up their slaves in his redoubt, with himself as guard, while three of the leaders would keep good watch at the gate. They accepted this proposal.

During the night, a slave named Sandyan Konaré approached Massa, saying: "We and you are of the same race, while we don't understand these people who are leading us. If you free us, we'll become your slaves and follow wherever you wish." At first, Massa refused; then, at Sandyan's insistence, he sought out old Sounsan for advice.

The latter said: "My son, you must seize this opportunity, for fortune favors only the daring. In order to satisfy yourself as to the true intentions of these people, have them take an oath on our idol Nko and, if they agree to it, do your best."

Sandyan and his companions took the oath.

In order not to endanger the plan, Massa freed only two of the slaves and gave them bludgeons, with which they killed the guards. Then, after freeing the rest, Massa mounted the roof of the redoubt and shouted to the people of Darigo that the slaves had rebelled and had assassinated their masters. The caravan leaders camping outside were terror-stricken and took to their heels, leaving behind all their merchandise. Massa put the guns and powder in a safe place.

After these events, Massa sent Mori-ba, son of Fa Siné, to ask his father whether the slaves ought to be turned over to the people of Darigo. Fa Siné answered: "Let Massa keep the slaves, and I'll furnish him with enough bullets to resist the people of Darigo."

Further, in line with his own father's advice, Massa assembled the young men and told them frankly what had happened. The old man had said: "Force them to take a stand and, if they refuse to make common cause with you, Nko will kill them

173 because of their oath. On the other hand, if they approve your action, we shall keep the slaves."

The young men entirely approved of Massa's decisions and declared themselves ready to obey him. Massa then addressed the slaves, saying: "If you refuse to obey me, I shall return you to your masters; if you [107] follow me, we shall make war." (1)

1. A more exact term would be "armed pillage."

They renewed their oath of obedience.

Thereupon, being confident of his own strength, Massa notified the people of Darigo that he was not going to return the slaves. Then the people of Darigo made ready to attack him (2).

2. Raffenel also suggests that a similar sort of transformation of slaves into warriors was the basis of the empire of Kaarta. Others say that the affair took place under Séba-Mana (Traditions historiques et légendaires [Historical Traditions and Legends], Delafosse) and still others that it occurred in the time of Déssé-koro (Traditions historiques et légendaires, Delafosse). It is more than likely that this was the usual means by which adventurers used to gather bands of plunderers.

At this time Kassoum Konaré, the ancestor of the Usoubila-ka, arrived with a large fighting unit to ask for Massa's only daughter, Sata, in marriage. Massa agreed and absorbed his son-in-law's people into his own forces.

Old Soumsan, feeling his end at hand, prayed to Allah: "If my son is to gain power from the coming struggle, let me die at once; if not, let me live for ten years more." Three days later he was dead.

2; Monteil--117 G-5 (1902-1923) 1924 FA8 Bambara FA8

*173
643
551

Massa and His Descendants (Massa-si-ou) (3)

3. "Native traditions often make out that Sonsa and Sounsa-Massa are one and the same person, to whom they give the title of massa or mansa, meaning 'king' in Banmana, so it is that the word massa-si or mansa-si should be interpreted to mean 'descendant of the king' and not 'descendant of a man named Massa'" (Delafosse, in Traditions historiques et légendaires, p. 52, note 4).

"The Kouloubali who were descended from Niangolo, the elder brother of Baramangolo, had adopted the title of Massa-si (descendants of the king) because they belonged to the senior branch."

It is evident that this interpretation does not correspond with my text. However, I have often been told by native traditionists that Massa-si meant "descendant of a man named Massa." It might be that Sounsan-Massa was a double name applied to a single person, as was the case for several Massa-si chiefs, including Seba-Mana, Gran-Forokoro, and Massa-Bakari. Even though a single person is meant, that would still be no obstacle to the assumption that the word Massa-si means "descendant of Massa" by an abbreviation of Soun-san-Massa, since we have analogous examples: Biton-si and Ngolo-si are used to designate respectively the descendants of Mamari-Biton Kouloubali and Ngolo Dyara. It is true that Massa-si, composed of massa meaning "king," may refer to a whole royal lineage, but it should be noted that among

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the Bambara with whom we are concerned, the expression Massa-si is only used when referring to the royal lineage of Kaarta.

Massa (1670-1690). In order to combat Massa, the Marka people of Darigo summoned the Bambara who were [108] under their authority and whose principal chiefs were the following: Tonnéguéla Mari-dyan Dembélé; Konikoni Tiénégué Dyara; Tiéma Dyara; and Sanou-ba-Mamari Dyara of Fala-da-la.

The siege of Soumsan-na began. Thanks to preparations made in advance, Massa was able to hold out for many months, while making sorties against the attackers.

However, neither side had prevailed when, in the eleventh month, Massa managed to escape during the night. Followed by the boldest of his followers, he fell on the village of Mari-dyan Dembélé, sacked it and, loaded with booty, managed to return to his tata. He appeared next day on the roof to taunt Mari-dyan and showed him his favorite wife and her finest embroidered blouse.

Such audacity gave the other chiefs food for thought; each of them reflected that Mari-dyan's fate might be in store for himself and so the Bambara chiefs took counsel. However, just as the discussion was about to get started, one of those present, Sanou-ba Mamari Dyara, withdrew, saying that he did not want to take part in any deliberations along with a one-eyed man, because the only result would be a disaster. He was referring to Konikoni Tiénégué Dyara who, indeed, had only one eye.

Upset by these circumstances, the allies parted to return home; so Massa was saved. However, at the instigation of the Marka people, the Bambara chiefs made all the trouble they could for Massa. They sent word to Ségou to the descendants of Barama-Ngolo that the fugitives vainly sought by their ancestor were still in their country and they offered to help in any undertaking against them (1).

1. Massa is reputed to have had 67 sons and 76 daughters. In principle, he imposed

*173

exogamy, saying: "No one shall marry one of my daughters unless he is an inhabitant of the town." Then he charged his children never to take spouses from the Massa-si clan (Traditions historiques et légendaires, Delafosse, p. 53).

Béni Fali-Sékolo (1690-1700). Since Massa was by now a very old man, he abandoned active authority to his son, Béni Fali, called Sékoro, who was as strong and brave as his father. He continued his father's practice of armed pillage, assisted by his many brothers, the best-known of whom included: Gran, called Foro-koro; Séba, called Mana; Tyema, the son of Nya-nilé; Bo, son of Déni-ba; Massa, called [109] Bakari; Séri-ba and Allahi, who were twins; and Mo-siré-bilé.

Gran, called Foro-koro (1700-1709). Some say that intrigues by the Soninké and the people of Niamala were what persuaded the fama of Ségou, Mamari called Biton Kouloubali, to attack the Massa-si. After a siege that lasted for three years, Sounsan-na had to surrender. Foro-koro was taken prisoner and sent to Ségou, where he was put to death. His skull (1) was kept

1. Mamari made it into a box for his amulets and it was the basis of his magic.

as a talisman by Biton.

Others, more explicit, tell how and why the attack was carried out against Sounsan-na. Mamari called Biton Kouloubali had given his daughter ba (2) Sana in marriage to Sana-ba

[654 576]

2. The word ba, which literally means "mother," is here used as a title of respect.

Mamari (3) Kouloubali of Mourdia. When the wedding party that

3. Sana-ba Mamari means "Mamari, son of the woman named Sana-ba."

#173 was bringing ba Sana to her future husband reached Damfa, it was met by Foro-koro. He fell in love with ba Sana at first sight and carried her away from her attendants by force and made her his wife.

It was to avenge this affront that Biton attacked Soumsan-na. It is said that he used magic arts to assure victory. He sent to Foro-koro a shirt (dioki) over which he had pronounced incantations and through which he had repeatedly stuck a needle while a marabout performed the appropriate rites. A Dioula was assigned the job of forcing Foro-koro to put on the fatal shirt. The Dioula went to Soumsan-na on a market day and took his place in the public square beside a well-stocked beer (dio) seller. Foro-koro, being a bit tipsy, had noticed this luxurious dioki and asked the price, which was ten slaves. Although this had discouraged other purchasers, on the contrary it aroused Foro-koro's vanity. He agreed to pay the price and at once put on the dioki to show it off. Since the Dioula had accomplished his purpose, he was in no mood to await payment and, fearing reprisals, he fled.

The next day, when he had sobered up, Foro-koro found the price too high [110] and sent for the Dioula. The man's precipitate departure put him on his guard and, fearing sorcery, he discarded the splendid dioki. It was too late; the spell worked.

Foro-koro owed his life solely to the fact that his wife, ba Sana, loved him and prevented her father's wrath from prevailing. However, Biton's followers managed to satisfy their master's desire for revenge by taking advantage of a lapse in ba Sana's vigilance. They marked Foro-koro with the tatoo peculiar to the slaves belonging to the fama of Ségou, and one day, when ba Sana was temporarily absent, they seized Foro-koro, dragged him into the brush, put him to death and abandoned his body after cutting off the head.

It is said that ba Sana was so grief-stricken that she was unwilling to remain near her father. So she left Ségou-koro with all her slaves and settled in a place called ba Sana-bougou after her, and later re-named Ségou-bougou.

*173 Séba, called Mana (1709-1760). The destruction of Sounsan-na forced the Massa-si survivors and those still faithful to them to seek refuge elsewhere from the implacable hatred of Biton. Some went to Bélé-dougou, others to Kaarta-binné (1)

> 1. In Kaarta-binné they had accepted the hospitality of the chief of that country, Soroko Dionné. They established themselves there, cultivated their fields, recouped their fortunes and then built a fortified enclosure. A caravan of 120 slaves led by people from Fouta arrived and, on orders from Soroko-Diouné [sic], the Massa-si gave them shelter. They either aided or provoked a revolt of the slaves, taking an oath of alliance with them as equals. However, the Massa-si retained the leading role and the right of interminage [from minage (?), tax on grain] (Traditions historiques et légendaires, pp. 54-55).

Among these fugitives were three of Massa's sons: Séba, called Mana; Bo, son of Deni-ba; Massa, called Bakari. There were also his [Massa's] daughter Sata and his four grandsons: Bo, son of Sira; Bo, son of Mousou-koura; Ntin or Ntén, or Ntéguékoro; and Sarhaba.

At this period the Kingui area was under Diawara power and it dominated all the surrounding cantons. However, grave dissension split the Diawara family into two parties; the party of the Sagoné and that of the Dabo-la. Implacably hostile to each other, they were fighting for power. The Dabo-la party was then in command and had its capital at Diara. Tourougoumbé was the [111] stronghold of the Sagoné. The chief at Nioro was the dyawando Bilali and the chief at Khagna-rémmé was Mansa Khagna.

Hoping to obtain valuable support, the Diawara Sagoné sent an emissary named Dia Doumbé Diawara to the Massa-si.

*173 The seers had predicted that if the first child born among the Massa-si after the arrival of the emissary turned out to be a boy, it would show that the decline of the Massa-si was only temporary. The contrary would indicate that the decline of the Massa-si would be complete. Now, at the very moment that Dia-Doumbé was greeting Séba Mana, word was brought that a woman named Ba-koro had just given birth to a male child whose father was Sira Bo: the child was named Ba-koro Tiéma.

Dia Doumbé carried out his mission by advising Séba Mana to send some gold to Mansa Khagna and to Souroukou Diani (1) to assure their neutrality while he attacked Markha-na,

1. Called Soroko Dioumé by other traditionists, he was chief of Kaarta-Bimbé.

a Dabo-la village, where Dia Doumbé said that the Massa-si would find abundant resources.

Séba Mana followed this advice and had no trouble taking Makha-na.

After this success, Séba Mana decided to settle at Léé, but Mansa Khagna, inspired by the gold he had received from the Massa-si, thought that if he exterminated them he would obtain valuable loot. So he blocked the road to Léé.

Séba Mana was victorious and he killed 98 out of the 110 elder sons, who, according to custom, were riding white horses.

He continued on his way and settled at Guidioumé Makhana, near the mountain of Goumbouron, where a petrified wedding [perhaps a rock formation?] is still to be seen (2). There, through

2. The legend of the petrified wedding is told by Raffenel, Vol. 1, pp. 219-220.

the intermediation of Dia Doumbé, he accepted the surrender of Mansa Khagna.

As a mark of special deference, the Massa-si received the following gifts: two horses from Mansa Khagna; two horses from

*173 the Diawara Sagoné; millet from Souroukou Diani; cattle from dyawando Bilali; chickens from the Diarisso; and strips of native cotton from the Marka. Later, when [112] their power had been restored, the Massa-si imposed these same gifts as tribute (1).

1. "At a time which seems to antedate Séba Mana, the Massa-si left Kaarta to go to the village of Guémou, where they were much feared. The Dyawara gave them a gift of seven thoroughbred horses; the Dyawando gave three fine heifers; and the Touré, grain and chickens. Then they came to Guidioumé with Séba-Mana at their head; the people of Guidioumé gave them 2,000 measures of grain; the Diafounou people, a thoroughbred horse and 500 measures of grain. From there they went to Mounia (Diafounou), north of Koniakari, and fought with the people of Khasso." (Traditions historiques et légendaires, p. 55).

Séba Mana finally settled at Léé. Three times he was attacked by the people of Khasso and three times he resisted them successfully, but his situation was nonetheless very precarious. In order to remedy this state of affairs, Déni-ba Bo (2) gave

2. According to the version reported by Delafosse, a certain Mansa Bakari (perhaps Massa Bakari) was sent to Fouta with gold to buy a relief army.

himself up as security for 67 horses to Suley, chief of the Déniankés. His griot Souleyman accompanied him.

Déni-ba Bo supported himself by hunting and turned ow his bag to a woman of the mabo caste who had attached herself to him. One day, this woman told him that she was on intimate terms with a genie who most often took on the guise of a small,

*173 deformed horse. She gave him this horse, whose name was Kori, and asked the animal to take good care of Déni-ba Bo.

It came about that one day some Moors stole the herds of the Déniankɛ́ people. When this occurred, the war drum (tabala) called together all the men, who lost no time in following the thieves' tracks. At the time, Deni-ba Bo was out hunting and when he heard the news on his return, he asked Suley Ndyaye (3) [for permission] to join the pursuers. Suley agreed

3. Chief of the Deniankɛ́.

and allowed him to choose a horse. Deni-ba Bo chose Kori and, despite the ridicule of the onlookers, rode off on the ugly little animal.

As they rode along, Kori said: "We are going to find our warriors beaten by the Moors and wanting you to turn back. Don't listen to them. Order your griot to follow the tracks of the cattle and proceed as far as the Moors' camp. There you will find your griot on the other side of the camp from the spot where you will be and, at an agreed signal, both of you fire your guns. The Moors will think they are surrounded and will flee."

[113] Everything turned out just as Kori had predicted. The warriors tried to persuade Déni-ba Bo to retreat, but he refused and, upon reaching the Moors' camp, employed the trick suggested by Kori. It was entirely successful. The Moors fled, and Déni-ba Bo easily recovered the stolen herds and returned them to the village.

As a reward for this splendid achievement, the Déniankɛ́ women decided to ransom Déni-ba Bo and, for this purpose offered all of their jewels. Suley refused, however, preferring to release his debt prisoner himself. In return he asked Déni-ba Bo to bind himself by a blood-oath, telling him furthermore to take any of his property he wanted. At the suggestion of the mabo woman, Déni-ba Bo asked for his friend Kori and for the royal insignia which included a pair of trousers, a shirt, a red cap and turban, and a copper axe.

*173 When he had been freed, Déni-ba Bo left at once to rejoin his brother Séba Mana. The latter was still shaken by an encounter that very morning with the Khassonké [Kasonke] who had had a column composed of 60 "foot." Mounting his horse, Séba Mana wanted to show his brother the scene of the battle. When they reached a small stream, the horses easily crossed over, but Séba Mana, who was very corpulent, hurt himself against the pommel of his saddle. With Déni-ba Bo's help he was able to reach home, but he fell gravely ill and died three months later (1).

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1. Séba Mana had established a special system of physical training for the young Massa-si boys. From the time they were weaned up to the age of twelve or thereabouts, they were brought up away from their families and were provided with a copious diet, consisting especially of meat which they ate almost raw. They were trained in boxing. Slaves bathed them morning and evening. When they reached the age of twelve, each received from the fama a complete set of clothes, a thoroughbred horse with harness and groom. They then returned to their father's house and were thus ready to swell the ranks of the army if need arose.

*173 Déni-ba Bo (1760-1780). The army of the Massa-si was still very weak since it had at that time only two "foot" instead of four. Nevertheless, Déni-ba Bo was determined to regain the land of his forefathers and said: "I imend to free myself from the n ti de and the n kho le (2)." He had cowries pulverized,

2. n ti de means "I say" in Soninké and n kho le means the same thing in Khassonké. Thus, Déni-ba Bo meant that he intended to free himself from both peoples.

*173 sprinkled Séba Mana's body with the resulting dust, wrapped it in [114] an ox-hide and placed it on a litter. He set out and in this manner reached Guémou, where he interred Séba Mana.

Then he marched against the Bambara of Niamala (near Mourdia) and, after defeating them, continued a vigorous offensive against all the enemies of his family. At Djigué he attacked Tiéma Dembélé, who had just returned from leading a column against Ségou. He took Djigué and killed Tiéma. He then turned against his uncle Sama Kouloubali and killed him at Kolo. Within three years he had taken and plundered 60 villages. In each village he used up the food provisions, enslaved the populace and circumcised the boys whom he then incorporated into his army.

Like his predecessors, he fought against the Khassonké; he besieged their capital, Koniakari, but was defeated. Not wishing to submit to a futile defeat, he decided to have himself killed in order to fulfill the prophecy that the Massa-si would rule over the land in which he died. Taking the saddle off his horse, he put it on the ground and sat down, expecting that the first Khassonké who found him would certainly kill him. He was discovered by three shoemakers who took him to Demba Séga, the chief of the Khassonké.

Since the latter had heard the prophecy, he did not want to put the prisoner to death; so he turned him over to his close friends. However, Madi, Demba Séga's son, together with the Diawara Dabola and some Bambara from Niamala, killed him in secret.

He had reigned for twenty years.

Sira Bo (1780-1789). Sira Bo established his headquarters at Guémou (southwest of Nioro) and continued to work for the restoration of the Massa-si power.

During the nine years of his reign, he made profitable conquests. He took Kita, the land of the Ba-ffing, and the country of Ménen; he continued the struggle with Khasso with varying success; he conquered part of Bélédougou and occupied Guidioumé and Bakhounou.

*173 Déssé-koro (1789-1802). According to one tradition, Déssé was captured at the same time as Foro-koro and taken with him to Ségou where he is said to have been marked with the [115] tatoo (1) peculiar to the slaves of the Ségou branch of the

[304 567]

1. This well-known tatoo consists of three cuts on each side of the face running from the temples to the lower jaw in front of the ears.

Kouloubali. Authority would normally have passed to Déssé on the death of Séba Mana, but because Déssé's fate was uncertain it was offered instead to Sira Bo. The latter is said to have refused at first, but he accepted when his brother Mo-siré guaranteed that even if Déssé should return, the power would not be withdrawn. When Déssé returned ten years later, he respected the promise made by his brother Mo-siré and waited until the death of Sira Bo to take command.

Whatever may be the truth of the matter, Déssé took advantage of the quarrels that arose at Ségou upon Ngolo Dyara's death to capture Niamina. It is said that a small forest of baobab trees later arose on the spot where his troops had encamped.

When Ma-n-son had been relieved of the worst of his worries by his victory over Nyana-n-koro, he was anxious to avenge the capture of Niamina (2) and so turned his attention to

2. The relations between Déssé and the people of Ségou are very obscure. Some say that, on being asked for help by Nyana-n-koro, Déssé stipulated that he would only agree to help if Foro-koro's skull were returned to him. When he had gained possession of the relic, he returned to Kaarta, promising to come back at the appropriate time. He did in fact return and encamped near Ségou after the defeat and death of Nyana-n-koro; he

*173.

sent word to Ma-n-son that he owed his victory to the fact that he -- Déssé -- had not aided Nyana-n-koro.

Then Ma-n-son is said to have sent a challenge to Déssé. Ma-n-son's emissary is supposed to have appeared before Déssé bearing the choice of a hoe (daba), a fetter and a bit. This symbolism meant that if Déssé chose the hoe, he was declaring an end to warfare; if he accepted the fetter, he was acknowledging the authority of Ma-n-son; and, finally, if he chose the bit, it meant that he intended to go on with striving for domination. Déssé is said to have chosen the bit, and that is why Ma-n-son attacked Guémou.

Déssé. He besieged Guémou (3) on February 22, 1796, according

3. According to another tradition, he merely pillaged the Bélédougou region while one of his brothers was simultaneously ravaging the left bank of the Niger from Niamina to Bammako. After all this, Ma-n-son returned to Ségou.

It was another affair that again brought Déssé and Ma-n-son into conflict. A Bambara village on the left bank that was under the protection of Ségou had its cattle carried off by some Moors. The cattle were sold to some Kaarta people, and the Bambara from whom they had been stolen made claims in vain. When Déssé was informed, he sided with his people, and Ma-n-son, likewise favoring his people, carried the war into Kaarta.

*173 to Mungo Park. Dêssé fled via Dioka to Tango

After having pillaged and destroyed Guémou, Ma-n-son attacked [116] Tango. Dêssé fled once more and took a stand at Guidingouma in the Guidimaka area. Ma-n-son surrounded the place, hoping to starve it out, but time passed without result and, sensing fatigue -- always a bad adviser -- among his ill-supplied men, he appealed to Ali, chief of the Oulad Mbarek. Ali refused to budge. So Ma-n-son turned against this recalcitrant ally and marched on Diara. However, hearing along the way at Niono that the Oulad Mbarek people had left for the north, he decided against following them and went home to Ségou.

Rid of his enemy, Dêssé returned to Guémou and, as this town had been destroyed, settled not far off at Dioka, which he fortified. Not long after, when a large caravan of slaves was passing through, he followed his grandfather Massa's example and became the leader of a new band of plunderers who joined the ranks of his faithful followers.

He continued his raids on the surrounding country until his death.

Ntin-koro (1802-1811. During his nine-years' reign, this Massa-si chief concentrated his efforts against the Kagoro people and conquered them. He also made some profitable raids among the Bambouc people.

Sara-ba (1811-1815). He spent the four years of his reign in pillaging Bélédougou, Birgo and Mandé.

Moussou-koura Bo (1815-1818). He was an implacable enemy of the Khassonké, a fact which earned him the title Fula-fo Bo ("Bo, killer of Peul"). Thanks to the intrigues of Kombossé Safêré, chief of Séro, he found himself master of the situation. After taking Koniakari and ousting the chiefs of Khasso, he became the ruler of Khasso on the right bank, so he assigned the area to one of his slaves named Fa-digui.

Bo-dyan Mori-ba (1818-1835). Bo-dyan set up his headquarters at Yelimané.

After forcing Fa-digui to submit, he raided the villages of the Gadiaga, Damga, Saloum and Bambouc areas in collaboration

*173 with the chief of Bondou. He thus found himself drawn into making peace with the chief of Khasso, who was an ally of the Bondou chief.

[117] Nyaralen Gran (1835-1844). We know nothing about this nine-year reign.

Mamari Kan-dyan (1844-1854). He left Yelimané for Khondié and then settled at Nioro. He was in command of the Massa-si when El Hadj Omar appeared. Before this, he had ousted the Diawara from Nioro, where he had settled; but he had had to fight for seven years with these same Diawara and his authority had only just begun to seem established when the Foutanké prophet arrived. Mamari Kan-dyan was unable to resist and fell into the hands of the invader. At first his life was spared but he was finally put to death, as will be described in what follows (see Chapter 6, Islam).

Those of the Massa-si who eluded El Hadj Omar fled to Bangassi (Foula-dougou), where they settled under the authority of their chief, Diringa Mori, who died 16 years later.

Under Boussei, who succeeded Diringa Mori, the Massa-si broke up into two groups: one settled at Guémou-koura (Kaarta-binné) and the other emigrated to Diani (Gadiaga).

On the death of Boussei there were new migrations. Modi Siré, son of Gran, settled first at Fata-fin and then at Félé-ba, villages near Badoumké; another group went to the Bondou area and settled at the village of Kidira.

Dama, who succeeded Boussei, abandoned Kidira and went to Goré, near Daramané, and then to Guémou, south of Diani (Gadiaga). There he divided the Massa-si into seven villages: Guémou, Dyidyan, Dyané-khassé, Taroutallah, Madi-na, Nyaralén Dyogou and Moussa Makhana.

[175] After the French had taken Nioro, Dama, who had always been hostile to the "people of Fouta," was called to Kaarta by Colonel Archinard. He settled at Farabougou and died there. When Ségou was captured by the French, we chose Dama's son, Bo-dyan, to govern there.

Dama was succeeded as chief of the Massa-si by Allahi, whose authority lasted for only nine months. He was succeeded

*173 by Mori-ba and then by Gossi, who left Fara-bougou for Lambé and finally went to Diabé.

Genealogical Table of the Chiefs of the Clan of Kaarta

The Kouloubali

Nya-Ngolo

Sounaan

Massa

1670-1690

The Massa-si

Sé-kolo..... 1690-1700

Foro-kolo..... 1700-1709

Séba-Mana..... 1709-1760

Bo-dyan Mori-ba — Déni-ba Bo..... 1718-1833 1760-1780

Sira-Bo..... — (Nya-blé Ntyéma... 1780-1789

Déné-koro.....? 1789-1802

Ntin-koro..... 1802-1811 } (Massa Bakari)..... }

Sara-ba..... 1811-1815 }

Mousou-koura Bo. —?..... 1815-1818

Nyaralén Gran 1835-1844 } (Dya-Douba)..... —(Mo-siré)..... }

Mamarikan-dyan 1844-1854 }

(Séri-ba and Allahi)..

[119] Chapter 2

Concepts

1. Beliefs

195 826 The Bambara, like ourselves, has a sense of inner life and he expresses it in his language through figurative expressions which, in a sense, localize his sensations.

The eye, whose lens reflects everything that goes on around us, is, for the Bambara, a kind of mirror of the inner life: to be sad, nye na-fin, means "to have a somber eye"; to be cheerful, nye na-dye, means "to have a bright eye"; to be beaten down, nye na-koro, means "to have an eye that is old."

The head is the seat of decision, will and pride. To be active, kun' kene, is "to have an ardent head"; to be tenacious, kun' gwele, is "to have a hard head."

All emotional life is concentrated in the heart. A man who has proper feelings, a son' ka nyi, "has a good heart"; one who is bad, a son' ka dyugu, "has an evil heart." In a more general sense, anything that acts within (kono) us is a be n-kono, literally "it is within myself," meaning "I think, I intend, etc."

It is noteworthy that for these people life resides especially in two organs, the heart and the liver. The most solemn oath among them always contains the phrase: i ka n son' ni m bien' ta or "take my heart and my liver," that is, "destroy me, annihilate me, by removing these two knots of life."

774 195 In addition to these figurative expressions, which are common to [120] all languages, there are abstract terms which serve to express all that we imply in the words "life," "soul," etc. In Bambara, ni is "physical life," characterized by the drawing of breath (ni), which begins and ends with life. Dusu is emotional or moral life; si is duration, in the sense of living and also of becoming.

774 The Bambara does not conceive of a body's shadow as being caused by the interception of light by that body. For him

774 it is a fluid emanated from the body itself and made manifest as much by the shadow, which may be seen in sunlight or in a bright light, as by the image which appears when the body is placed in front of a reflecting surface. This fluid is called dya.

774 787 The dya has the faculty of leaving the body when it is asleep to wander wherever it wishes; the sight of its wanderings, which the body can witness, constitutes a dream (sugo). Dream is a kind of reality; it is in a sense the private life of the dya in company with its fellow-dya. During waking hours, the dya accompanies the actions of the body; during sleep, the body must endure the dya's peregrinations, for there is no doubt but that the dya rules the body it inhabits. Thus, waking a person abruptly is virtually a criminal act because, if the dya is away [761] at the time, a too abrupt summons may break the link between the dya and the body, and such a rupture (sa) is death (sa). Besides, the body has only a vague memory of the wanderings of its dya, it experiences the consequences of this action. On awaking, the body is exhausted by all these mad rushing about and fantastic escapades, and it feels the effects of the dya's actions, either good or bad.

In short, this dya is comparable to what some Europeans call a "double."

775 Further, it appears that the dya plays a crucial role in the "return" (sagi) to life, that is, rebirth, which is one of the most strongly held beliefs of the Bambara. After death, the dya is reincarnated in the same families; the Bambara even claim to have positive proof of this fact. Such and such a newborn child has such and such anatomical peculiarity of the deceased -- is this not a proof that the deceased wanted to show thereby that he was re-embodied? If a child dies very young, the body is mutilated in some agreed manner -- a finger is broken, for instance -- [121] and if later a child is born in the family with a similar deformity, everyone is convinced that the dead child has "returned": a sagira, "he has returned."

It is also believed possible for a dead person to be reincarnated far from his own people. All over Bambara country stories are retold of dead people who, more or less long after

*173 It was then that Ma-n-son founded the village of Sira-koro, but he assigned no chief to it, keeping the direct administration of the place in his own hands.

Of the 740 chiefs of slaves who had sworn allegiance to him only 60 remained; he decided that they alone should continue to exercise their functions and that their respective posts should be hereditary.

[89] Ma-n-son called a general assembly and asked for a column to be used against Yarouga. The slaves refused on the ground that it would be enough to summon Yarouga to get satisfaction.

Ma-n-son crossed to the left bank with a small escort and summoned Yarouga. On the way, Yarouga was overpowered by the emissaries, dragged before Ma-n-son and at his orders put to death.

He was replaced by Ko-dyado, one of Ma-n-son's slaves.

Ma-n-son sought to find out whether the Peul chief, Bon-gué, had left any children. When he learned that there were five, he summoned the eldest to him and gave him 1,740 slaves and command over Sama-n-koro.

Then Ma-n-son called the other Peul chief, Ndyan, and said: "Why did you not tell me that Bon-gué had left five children?"

"They were so young!"

"That's a poor reason! The truth is that you profited by my being busy elsewhere to appropriate all of your brother Bon-gué's property. But no matter, I shall do you no harm. You may keep what you have, but you'll get no more."

Out of the twelve Peul settlements organized by Ngolo, Ma-n-son made two groups: one for Ndyan and the other for Bon-gué's children. This is how the two Peul tribes, Ndyan-na and Bon-gué-na, known as the Fur-ba Fla-n, were founded. When Ndyan died, he was succeeded by his son Bakari, more commonly known as Bakari Ndyan (Bakari, son of Ndyan) (1).

1. See in the following "texts" fragments of the legendary history of this Bakari Ndyan.

775 their death and more or less far away from the place where they died, have been seen living a new life.

774 The dya is then, as it were, the essence of individuality,
775 and the body, its material expression, takes on forms that are somehow characteristic of the dya.

The dya is a fluid which has its own attributes. There are sorcerers who are thought to know ways to capture the dya, especially for the purpose of using it to make idols that can talk.

It is further believed that a part of the dya is indestructible because it is made up of another fluid common to all nature, which the Bambara call nyama.

The nyama has no shape, but it retains, as it were, a trace of the identity it had during its incarnation; so the name borne by the person who was animated by this nyama has an irresistible attraction for the nyama and the latter is forced to obey anyone who knows how to use this propensity to make it carry out his wishes. After death, the nyama retains human contacts and, in certain respects, continues to behave as it did during its corporeal lifetime. Its manifestations are seen by the Bambara in matters of vengeance: the nyama of an ancestor is especially attentive to the manner in which the ancestor's wishes are being carried out and it is relentless in punishing those who fail to comply. It is the nyama of the fa (father of a family or patriarch) who torments the accursed; it is the nyama of the victim who pursues the murderer; and it is the nyama of anything tabooed that strikes down the impious.

So it is that, for the Bambara, a human being is composed of a corporeal body (su) which serves as the outward envelope (fune) of a fluid element (dya), whose subtle essence (nyama) is merely a part of the universal energy which permeates all nature.

771 [122] To a certain extent the Bambara applies the foregoing ideas on human beings to all that surrounds him. However, it should not be assumed from this that he conceives of everything as being made exactly in his own image. To express abstract ideas, he uses concrete terms which may, however, give a false impression. There is no doubt whatever that the Bambara differentiates between himself and animals; he also distinguishes from vegetables or minerals.

771 In any case, these are questions which he does not ask or which, at least, he has not considered in any way that would cause him to make logical, even if fragmentary, syntheses. His words and his acts are indications and sometimes even guideposts for us, but how uncertain and misleading they can be! And, in the observation of current facts, how many at least seeming contradictions there are! However, in the main, the analysis given in the paragraphs above represents the basis of Bambara dogma, since everything happens in reality as if the Bambara were living in accordance with these principles.

761 772 That being the case, life results from the union of the two parts of the body, while death is a result of their separation. Whence come these two elements and who it is that decides upon their union? No answer is possible. The Bambara say, merely, that certain persons are reincarnations. Precautions [844] taken during pregnancy and delivery show that childbirth is one of those mysteries against which taboos must be observed as a protection. The frequent and readily believed stories about [845] women giving birth to monsters -- usually animals -- bear witness to the affinities which, in the minds of the Bambara, exist between all creatures. But nothing specific is said about what precedes and determines the birth of a child.

562 778 This is a secret to which the Bambara are, of course, not indifferent. It is evidenced in the fact that women, through whom man comes into the world, are held to be doubtful creatures, at the very least, partly because of menstruation, which makes a woman impure, and partly because of the mysterious travail she endures during the delivery of a child (1).

[774]

1. Women are also susceptible of being possessed continuously by a spirit (see the story of the Déni-bo Ba, p. 123). That is why, when a woman is several times widowed, she is suspected of being possessed by a jealous spirit who kills off her husbands. She is often even thought to be herself a sorceress.

562 This suspicion readily degenerates into disrespect, scorn and
778 hatred when a woman [123] is weak -- this being the usual state of affairs. On the contrary, the feeling changes to superstitious fear if she resorts to occult practices and shows herself
[754] an adept at sorcery. Many old women are held to be very expert at such practices.

851 In the same connection, it should be noted that a newborn child is also subject to scrutiny. For seven days after birth it is not officially taken into the family, because it is thought that during this period the infant may undergo metamorphosis unless closely watched over by its mother.

We shall see, through a study of their institutions, how the Bambara conceive of life and organize it.

Funeral practices will show us how the Bambara regard the idea of death.

And after death?

775 The Romans distinguished among spirits: the manes or
769 good gods (dïï[1] manes) and the lemurs or evil spirits, both of whom take an interest in the family.

The Bambara have analogous concepts.

Once it has left the body, the soul of a patriarch goes to join the souls of his ancestors, where it finds a spiritual family which protects the earthly family.

The manes (fa su-u) always like to frequent the places where their bodies lived, and that is why one keeps the things that belong to the deceased, why he is buried near his house or sometimes even under the floor, and why some families piously keep the skull of the departed to do it honor.

[778] The entrance-hut (blon') is usually the site of the altar of the ancestors and of the family gods. The ancestral altar may be a small board with a human mask, called kara, or a mound of earth shaped vaguely like a human being. The manes are thought to enter into these objects to receive the offerings and sacrifices made to them.

It is sometimes thought that the world of the manes may be without light and heat but that otherwise they each continue the existence it had in life with the same passions, the same

1 [dei ? —Analyst]

775 passions, the same preferences and the same [124] animosities.
769 The weak lead a passive existence in poverty and oblivion, whereas the powerful -- chiefs, heads of families, diviners -- are, on the contrary, active, intriguing and passionately devoted to the interests of their earthly families. They live among their fellow beings, who are incorporeal like themselves, just as their relatives live on earth. However, they all have powers superior to those of earthly men over winds and rain, farming and hunting, in short, over all things that constitute the visible world of man. All can manifest themselves to the living, and they like to choose a place where their presence and their action will be most useful and where they prefer to receive offerings, as in a grove, on a hill, or near a spring or a tomb.

Certain manes are thought to attain an increasingly eminent position in the invisible world through special activity, until they become pure spirits.

Woe unto him who fails to maintain cordial relations with his manes! Woe unto him who neglects the dead! The dead suffer from such negligence, become angry and seek vengeance. Hence the terrifying appearance of ghosts who come to bewitch the impious; hence the possession that disturbs a person's faculties to such a degree that it makes him dangerous to others and only exorcisers could restore them to their normal state.

Here occur the analogies with the lemures, for abandoned manes are easily captured through the sorcerers' artifices and then must do the latter's bidding. Further, all those who were cast off by society during their lifetime because of harmful activities, like those of sorcerers or criminals, the accursed also have their thurifers, whom they help with their supernatural powers.

775 Does this survival of the good and the evil have any purpose or any duration and, if so, what are they? Do people believe in immortality or eternity? Obviously the Bambara do not ask such questions and native practices do not seem to provide any answers. The one definite belief is in a survival which the Bambara can only conceive of in terms of ordinary life; the terms used to describe the other world bear this out. the dead eat,

776 drink, dress themselves, wear adornments, etc. -- in short, behave exactly like living men.

812 [125] All peoples use or have used such language in trying to express a concept which is by its nature impossible to make concrete. It is, therefore, perhaps premature to conclude that a Bambara cannot conceive of a strictly immaterial world for his manes. He is merely at present incapable of giving a description unencumbered with concrete terms in habitual use. However, it may be stated in general that the Bambara does not trouble himself about the why or how of things outside of what he sees or knows. Reality surrounds him and limits him. He makes decisions on the spur of the moment and also under the influence of time-honored empiricism which is the basis of custom.

776 We have pointed out that among the incorporeal souls are some who, through the right efforts, rise to such heights that they can enter the world of spirits. There are spirits, indeed, who have nothing of the human about them. What are their origin and nature? The Bambara say of them: ma si fa do, meaning "It is a kind of person." Here, too, the expression betrays the thought. Aside from the fact that the native vocabulary does not provide for expressions strictly immaterial, the Bambara has an inevitable tendency to use himself as an object of comparison. For him, the world of the spirits like that of the manes, is analogous to our own. But the manner in which he speaks of the spirits contradicts his words. A spirit is invisible, without a material body; if it appears, it does so under the most diverse forms, borrowed for a brief time. A spirit is often called "a wind," meaning "a fluid." It is also a weightless substance, so rarefied that it can go anywhere -- even to entering a living man's body, where it can perform all sorts of fantastic things (1).

1. See Chapter 7.

For the Bambara, most spirits remain in this vague and inconsistent state. Only events, circumstances or the native's will occasionally tear some of them away from this chaos and transports them to the worldly scene (2). We shall speak of them

2. Assuming for these and other similar

776

terms the same meaning of supernatural forces.

again in the chapter on brotherhoods.

[126] Spirits, genii and gods (1) known to the Bambara

1. See on p. 123 the tradition about the horse Kori who was the husband of a mabo woman.

may be divided into three classes:

First, manes who have become spirits. These are of ten wandering and ill-disposed spirits. That is why the word nyama, to which we have alluded, is often used in a pejorative sense. It is also perhaps believed -- by analogy again -- that some manes can become so perfect in evil that they become true evil spirits, just as others become, if not actually good spirits, at least indifferent ones.

A second category comprises genii of the place or gods of the earth (nyana dugu-da-siri). There is not a single spot that [823] is inhabited, cultivated, populated or, on the other hand, isolated and deserted that does not have its genie. However, only some of these genii have an organized cult. They are usually the protectors of those who inhabit, cultivate, frequent or visit the places in question, provided that they are suitably honored. They often reveal their presence by entering into direct relations with someone who is in their vicinity and telling him how they wish to be honored in exchange for protection (2); on other oc-

2. See the story about the genie who revealed himself to Kolé (p. 51).

casions they are only discovered by a "seer." In any event, the genie of a place has complete possession of whatever is in the place, and man can profit in one way or another only in accordance with his pact with the genie. In principle he has only a simple right of usufruct, different from and more extensive than our right.

776 The third class comprises the enormous throng of genii of all sorts included under the vague and general term of nyana (3).

[177]

3. One also hears the word nyena. I do not think that this is a corruption of the Arab word jinn. In the first place, it was not Islam that introduced the concept to the Bambara, since it is common to all Blacks. Further, the word nyana is connected with a root nya meaning "powerful," "lord," "master," and nyena is only a dialectal variant.

The nyana may be divided into two categories: the [127] wandering and the solitary, for whom no permanent or formal cult is provided. They live pretty much anywhere. Some have a marked preference for being near men, for crossroads or for the vicinity of wells or springs. They also wander, invisible and ready for pranks, in the courtyards of houses where during the night they love to roam among the kitchen-ware. It is said that they put unclean things into the pots unless one has been careful to turn them upside down. It is even said that if any woman is so imprudent as to use a pot in which one of these wandering spirits has urinated, she will give birth to a sorcerer.

Others of these cult-less spirits throng the countryside and are the terror of travelers (1). Everyone has heard of Wokolo: a

1. They can assume any form they like and take part in the life of humans under the most diverse forms. See p. 123 for the horse Kori.

little black, hairy hunter who likes to live in the trees, along the paths and also in the brush, beside creeks. Others say that he likes to live in the si (Bassia Parkii) which we call the butter tree or karite. In any case one cannot escape his sharp arrows except

by greeting him as soon as he is observed; if he is unarmed, the best thing to do is to jump on him and rain so many blows on him that he loses count. Then one can escape while he is still knocked out.

The second category of nyana includes a motley array of spirits, all of whom have cults. The outward manifestations of these cults have struck anyone traveling in the country, and under their apparent diversity there are recognizable general traits. All are magic practices intended to make the spirits serve man's will. By this means, man tries to make use of supernatural forces of the same nature as those whose unfavorable action he fears. He resorts to the invisible for weapons of defense and of attack. However, these practices must never go beyond certain limits, which are not too well-defined, if they are to be legitimate. Beyond these limits it becomes illicit magic or sorcery, which is especially feared and, whenever possible, relentlessly punished (2).

2. See Chapter 7 on the suba.

[128] In reality, the whole mass of these facts is extremely confused. The licit and the illicit are intertwined to the point where they cannot be disentangled. However, there are perfectly clear cases where there seems to be no doubt about the distinction; but there are all possible gradations between strictly magic practices and unadulterated sorcery.

Theoretically, the nyana are all-powerful and are honored the more in proportion to these powers, since, in general, it is their malevolent side that earns them their reputation. Homage is paid to them much more out of fear and terror than because of the kindness sometimes attributed to them. What a Bambara wants of them is the dyigi-seme, or "powerful master," who will protect him against everything and everyone and, if need be, help him against his enemies or give him the means of succeeding in some evil project.

A belief in a master of the universe exists among the Bambara, but the belief has borrowed from Islam a degree of

776 precision of which the native substratum seems unaware. In any event, there is no Bambara word for "God" except the one [177] brought by the Moslems -- "Allah," pronounced as Ngala. This lack of a Bambara word may be explained by their custom of avoiding pronouncing the name of powerful people for fear of incurring their wrath.

[177] There is no superior spirit of evil: Seïtane [Satan] is likewise a Moslem introduction. The Bambara does not visualize a hierarchy of spirits.

776 Finally, it must be concluded, from the existence of many magic practices, that there is a belief in a kind of uni-778 versal energy, which is diffuse by nature and which, by appropriate 789 means, one can capture and use as one likes. Certain genii or gods are merely emanations of this invisible, imponderable and active force, which no obstacle can stop and which can instantly overcome space and strike at a distance. This is the basis of all native magic.

[129] 2. Morality and Customs

776 When, as among Catholics and Moslems, the after-life is believed to be influenced by one's conduct in this life, there 577 is a rule which determines what is and what is not proper if one wishes to earn the greatest possible rewards in the life to come. The saints and pious men have shown the way to this end.

For the Bambara, however, the next life is merely a continuation of this one and he does not think that he can, by conduct, improve his chances in the next life since it offers no rewards or punishments for his day-by-day actions. Neither his manes nor his genii give him an example of conduct to guide him. Therefore, without thought of the future, he goes along solely concerned with the present; he seeks what will give him pleasure, tries to avoid what seems harmful, and all this in a groping way, as one walks in the dark.

577 Sometimes, it is true, he is led to behave with a degree of decency and to avoid certain too shocking lapses, which would 626 expose him to reproach, alienate his friends and create for him

2; Monteil--143 G-5 (1902-1923) 1924 FA8 Bambara FA8

577 an uncomfortable situation among his own family; but under-
626 neath this surface, the evil shows through. It is not unusual to
577 be faced with a disconcerting absence of moral sense, ferocious
157 egotism, deep-seated duplicity, impudent treachery and cold, unperturbed cruelty (1). And one can see, perhaps in all of

1. The chronicle of Ségou, especially, attests this tradition of trickery and hypocrisy (see especially the tales about Ma-n-son, p. 93, and about Da, p. 101).

them, the scorn and even hatred felt for anyone who is unfortunate, weak, ill or abandoned. However, it should certainly be noted that there are also Bambara who display the most disinterested devotion, generous hospitality and remarkable courage; some even give evidence of that kind of inborn distinction which is to be found among even the most primitive peoples and which is the mark of superior people.

183 Thus, no code organizes Bambara rules of life. Everything depends upon custom, that mysterious thread, at once fragile and strong, which links the generations one with another [130] and which sustains the individual, though he is unaware of it, to such an extent that he is completely lost without it. Handed down by earlier generations, superstitiously preserved, it is imposed through fear of the punishment which will follow transgression. At first glance, custom appears to be an amalgam of the most heterogeneous elements and that is why we Europeans find it at once respectable and ridiculous, good and bad, useful and futile, sometimes atrocious and then again excellent. On closer study it is seen to exhibit, on the basis of feelings common to all humanity, an efflorescence peculiar to the native milieu, a natural morality which duplicates positive laws.

It is the nature of man to observe certain laws, to see the good and the bad in what surrounds him and, in his conduct, to display a leaning toward the good and an aversion to the bad. He recognizes within himself something which criticizes his actions from a similar point of view and, which, in fact, judges them.

183 The Bambara has a very highly developed sense of this
181 idea of justice and there is nothing he resents more than injustice or a denial of justice. His resentment is stubborn and his vengeance, which may be deferred under a show of indifference, is implacable. The chronicle of Ségou is rich in pertinent examples. There was Ngolo Dyara, bringing murder and disaster on his own relatives in order to satisfy his hatred for having been sold into slavery by his uncle and not ransomed by any of his relatives. There was Kégné Mari who, watching the murder of Touré-koro in the Komo wood, expressed his vengeance finally fulfilled by saying: "Remember how, falsely accusing me of adultery with one of your wives, you had me lashed? And how on that day I told you that even though I were lying on the ground, if I could touch you with my foot, I would lay you low? Here at last is the day of my vengeance!" Similar examples are innumerable.

If he is powerless against injustice, the Bambara will wait patiently and, each time he has to speak, will dissimulate his weakness in formulas which have a double meaning, such as
[195] O do!, meaning "That's it!" O nya-na, meaning "Oh well!" Tigi!, meaning "That's true"; and other similar expressions. At the same time, he is repeating to himself his proverb: don' m'i fantan', a bla R'a teme, meaning "Don't pay attention while you are weak," that is, "Wait until I am strong enough to take vengeance (lit., to pay you back)."

This instinctive feeling for justice accounts, in a certain
181 measure, for the family bonds made up of reciprocal rights [131]
571 and duties between parents and between them and their children
626 and, by an analogy of which we shall see other examples, between master and slave and between chief and subject. The obligation to respect all pacts concluded in the form of vows, oaths or fraternal alliance rests on the same basis. And it is the same notion that inspires the repression of acts which are almost universally condemned: perjury, treason, false witness, slander,
[691] theft and murder. It sustains the tireless persistence of the pleader who will go through endless lawsuits to obtain redress for a wrong done to him or to one of his people. And it gives strength to public vengeance against the sorcerer.

183 However, there is superimposed upon this natural law its application, the so-called positive law. How very odd is the aspect of this natural law beneath its external surface! For there are as many ways of envisaging the application of natural law as there are legislators, and among the Bambara, in many respects everyone is his own legislator since each has his own custom. All these [individual] customs which jostle, cross, interpenetrate and superpose each other, constitute for the European a compact mass which he calls "custom," whose thousand facets are changeable, elusive, diverse and unstable. However, under these disparate exteriors emerge general traits which are, so to speak, the framework of custom, and this will be shown in the following study of institutions.

183 784 Among the laws which the Bambara imposes on himself or on his fellows, the most widespread and, in any event, the ones most noticed by Europeans, are the taboos (tne). The Bambara forbids himself, his relatives and his congeners to do or to say certain things; and the domain of these prohibitions has, theoretically, no limits. A hasty and therefore superficial and incomplete study of what may be called "the honorable name" (dyamu) has given rise to research by ethnographers on these taboos as they affect the limited area of the dyamu; they have chosen to study taboos especially in this connection.

In actual fact, however, the taboo (tne) penetrates the entire native milieu and is really its law. The purpose is to prevent any contact whatsoever with the invisible [132] on the theory that, should such contact take place, it would inevitably unleash severe punishment upon its author unless the latter had the time and the means to purify himself at once through ritual procedures. As a result, the only person who can state what a taboo is, is one who has knowledge of the invisible and can discern its presence when the ordinary person is aware of nothing. Knowledge is the prerogative of the old (koro) and of the master (fa), who represent the ancestors and are the guardians of custom. It is also the secret of a small number of "seers," whose natural methods are ordinarily reinforced by innumerable processes of mantic.

183 Thus used, taboo has organized and transformed the
784 native milieu; it has established a line of demarcation between the sacred and the profane by removing from ordinary intercourse persons, places and objects connected with the invisible and considered to be impregnated by it. However, since by its very nature it forms an incontestable and nonappealable law, it has been the favorite means of anyone in authority wishing to impose his will without fear of protest. Thus the laity has, so to speak, had to submit to a arbitrary system of law that is essentially religious. Social regulations, rules of hygiene, medical prescriptions, culinary preparations, forms of courtesy -- all these are surrounded with taboos and all have absorbed from the tne the very essence of its vitality and its constraining force.

784 Within the family, which is the generating force of any
593 collective group, the individual finds himself surrounded by taboos throughout his life. They are what establish and maintain the authority of the elders (koro-u) and especially of their head (fa). Taboos impose ancestral traditions which have developed separately and become gradually superimposition from earliest times to the present, the whole of which constitute, in fact, family custom.

784 Patriarchy, brotherhood, the state, and all Bambara
[571] collectivities operate in the same way, since all collectivities are in a sense modeled on the natural family.

Religion, family, and society as a whole, in short the whole of Bambara civilization, have been and continue to be largely dependent on the tne.

[133] 3. Mantic, Religion and Magic

787 Mantic. Among the Bambara, as among all the Sudanese, religion and magic are both based on a belief in a permanent revelation which the manes, the spirits and the gods give to men with regard to the events of their lives.

The various means by which man can come to know this revelation on the part of invisible beings are what is called divination or mantic. This is extra-rational knowledge since it makes known things which could not be learned through reason

787 alone and it applies to the future as well as to the present and the past.

787 Mantic differs from magic in that the latter allows man
788 to use certain methods so as to subordinate natural and extra-
791 natural forces, while the former is contemplative knowledge, which does not impinge on the prerogatives of the divine but merely puts divine thoughts into communication with human understanding.

Further, theoretically at least, the diviner is not linked to any particular cult and is not to be confused with the priest, since he transmits the divine will outside of sacrifice, which is the priest's function. However, it also sometimes happens that the diviner is the oracle of a particular divinity and that the same person combines the functions of both diviner and priest as in certain cults described in what follows.

787 There are innumerable methods of divination. Before pointing out the principal traits of some of them, let us first note that there are cases when the divinity enters into direct relationship with a human being and speaks to him in human language. The chronicle of Ségou gives an example, in the legend concerning Kolé, head of Biton's guards, who was approached by a genie in the forest and told of the conditions on which he would be assured of his power. Ngolo Diara cheated Kolé of the benefits of the revelation by carrying out the sacrifice required by the genie before Kolé got around to it.

Dreams in which events take place just as they do in reality constitute one method of direct revelation. Frequently, however, there is a variation between dream and reality [134] which makes the meaning of the dream uncertain and therefore makes an interpretation necessary. Among the Bambara there are people who act as diviners by interpreting their own dreams. On being consulted about a problem, they claim to receive in a dream during sleep the correct information for throwing light on the difficulties involved.

A favorite method is that in which the diviner abandons himself to his god; he is possessed by the god and becomes his oracle. In the trance he is, so to speak, the instrument through

787 which the god speaks. In the brotherhoods of which we shall presently speak, the wara-mina-den' is, as the term indicates, "possessed by the god"; he is also said to be "the mouth of the god" (wara da). However, the diviner can speak only unin- [198] telligible gibberish during trance, and so this half-human, half-divine language must be interpreted by the wara-tigi or high-priest.

During dream or divine possession, the invisible is brought within man's reach by a sort of inner illumination; both methods may be said to be intuitive divination. Other methods, even more widely used, are based on a different procedure. These methods purport to penetrate the divine intention and will by observation of external signs. How do these signs differ from natural phenomena?

The native pays very little attention to what we call [811] natural laws. He reasons by analogy and attributes any unfamiliar phenomenon to an invisible being endowed like himself with intelligence and will. The indications of this will are not precise, and it is up to each person to recognize and to interpret them. Divination based on external signs may be called deductive. The signs may be classified in two categories: those involving living beings and those involving inanimate objects.

787 Living beings. Theoretically, any animal is useful for
825 purposes of observation because its actions, whose determining cause is unknown to the ordinary man, reveal to the seer the divine will or intervention.

Observations of this kind have given rise to many taboos (tne). Here is an example: while crossing a [135] stream an ancestor of the Samaké was caught by a crocodile and carried down through the water to the creature's lair, where he was abandoned. It happened that the man was merely stunned and when he came to, he pondered how he might escape. Suddenly he felt some grains of sand fall on his face and, seeking the source, noticed that a thread of light came in through a tiny fissure in the rock. The grains of sand were coming through this crack, and he realized that an ant lion (gere) was throwing them in an effort to show him how to get out; so he managed to enlarge the crack enough to escape. But, remembering the insect to

787 which he owed his life, he vowed that he and his descendants
825 would evermore respect it. That is why the gere is me for all the Samaké, the descendants of that ancestor.

Before beginning a fight with Blisi, Bacari Dyan, a Peul, wanted to know the outcome. A marabout told him to get two rams: "Name one Blisi and the other Bacari," he said," and watch them fighting." To be sure, during one of their combats, the ram named Bacari killed the one named Blisi and such, too, was the result of the fight between Bacari Dyan and Blisi.

But although a living animal can show the divine will through its actions, the dead body of one offered in sacrifice is no less informative. It is the duty of the seer or initiate to discover the signs of the divine will from the dying spasms, from the position taken by the body, or from the relative position of the entrails or the general constitution of each animal. This branch of mantic is called extispicy, from which are derived various methods of divination used by the Bambara.

It is common practice to sacrifice a chicken; if it falls on its back, with its feet extended away from the observer, the omens are thought to be unfavorable. If the feet point toward the observer, the omens are good. Any other position is doubtful and, if need be, the sacrifice is repeated until a categorical answer has been obtained.

Often enough a Bambara returning from a long journey wants to learn whether one or another of his wives has been faithful to him. He sacrifices a rooster and, after opening it, examines the scrotum; if it looks normal, the wife has been faithful, but if it shows [136] certain peculiarities, notably a reddish color, her guilt is proved.

787 Inanimate objects. Every Bambara possesses a set of divining cowrie shells. He almost always carries a stated number of shells -- usually 12 -- in a small bag. If he wants to consult the omens -- about the most varied sorts of enterprise -- he takes the cowries in hand and throws them onto the ground from a point not far above the ground. He reads the answer in the general arrangement of the group and also in the position of individual cowries relative to one another. If one cowrie is

787 surrounded by several others, this designates a powerful master surrounded by his proteges and promises aid. If one cowrie is stuck perpendicularly in another, that pattern is called "little girl in the gourd" and presages the birth of a girl. If two cowries are close together and turned in opposite directions, this is the symbol of sexual intercourse and presages the success of a love affair.

The kola nut is used as often as the chicken for divinatory offering. Here is how the method operates with respect to the nyana dugu-da-siri, of which we shall soon speak. After separating the nut into its two parts, the officiant brings them together again between his thumb and index finger and touches the ground with them, while asking the nyana to make known whether the offering is accepted. Then from a point not far off the ground, he casts the nut against, or a little in front of, that which is supposed to be the seat of the nyana. If the two parts both turn toward the officiant on the sides which were formerly in contact, the reply is favorable.

The officiant then repeats the proceedings in order to find out if the nyana agrees that he should make the offering. A new position, with one part turned toward the officiant and the other toward the ground, means that the answer is favorable once more. In case of doubt or failure, the process is repeated as many as three times.

Stones are also used as intermediaries for divination. On [412] top of a flat stone -- usually one used for crushing condiments [137] is placed another stone, also flat but smaller. After having reflected deeply upon the object of his inquiry, the diviner holds the smaller stone with his fingertips and guides it slowly over the surface of the larger stone. He then interprets any slight resistance that developes as the smaller stone is moved around.

There is another method very similar to the one just described. The diviner places a gourd filled with water on some kind of rag or straw crown which water-carriers, in particular, place on their heads beneath the vessel to be carried. He rocks the gourd gently to and fro and then, as before, interprets the resistance produced.

787 With the same equipment the diviner sometimes operates differently. Setting the gourd firmly on the crown that supports it, he then taps it two or three times with his middle finger. Then, it is claimed, he can hear special sounds, which are revelations by the water-spirit and which he alone can understand.

In short, there is an endless number of divining practices and here, if anywhere, the old saw which says that the spirit blows where, when and how it listeth, is singularly appropriate. And nothing is more accommodating than human credulity. It [198] goes without saying that there are some remarkable ventriloquists among the Bambara, who give such talented support to inanimate objects that the latter become veritable oracles. A piece of horn stuck into the ground or a mute block of wood are thus transformed through such artifice into mediums that answer anyone on any subject.

[828] There are also many highly suggestible individuals who [154] readily fall into wakeful or hypnotic states, during which they reveal hidden things.

787 Another practice among the Bambara is the use of the 763 kolon' kala (1) which is specially amenable to hypnotic sugges-

[412] 1. This is the wooden pestle used in all native kitchens to crush grain and condiments.

tion. When a suspicious death requires search for a murderer, the corpse is often used for the discovery. It is carried on the heads of [138] two impressionable young men, who are then assumed to be possessed by the soul of the deceased. The lugubrious remains are rapidly borne through the settlement or the countryside, disregarding obstacles, until it finally stops of itself at a spot where the murderer or some revelatory sign is to be found.

787 A kind of effigy is often used instead of a corpse. This is made of a kolon' kala to which is tied a little bag containing bits of the body (finger-nails, hair, etc.) and which is wrapped in a cloth. The effigy plays the role of the corpse.

787 The kolon' kala is used in the same way to discover stolen or lost objects. In that case it is wrapped in a loincloth belonging to the victim of the theft, along with something equally personal.

What are we to conclude from these divinatory practices? Are oracles based entirely on charlatanism and trickery? This would be a failure to recognize the credulity of the practitioners, most often the first to believe in their own practices.

771 Religion and Magic. There is nothing more involved, incoherent and contradictory than the cult customs of the Bambara. In order to give a clear picture of the essential traits, we shall follow an outline based on the distinction which becomes apparent on close analysis.

It can be stated that these people always honor the manes, the nyana dugu-da-siri and some other nyana, without presuming to impose human will upon them. Indeed, it may even be said that the Bambara make an effort to behave in a manner presumed to be pleasing to them.

However, the majority of the nyana are spirits suborned by man and serving his will.

Finally, there are appropriate rites which make it possible for humans to exploit a portion of the universal energy and to use it as they wish.

771 Let us say that the cult of the manes and of the independ-
789 ent nyana are what constitutes the religion of the Bambara, while the subjection of the spirits and the exploitation of universal energy properly constitute magic, which in its most feared form is called sorcery.

This distinction is obviously arbitrary. There is no custom that is not in some measure impregnated with magic, and this is so true that it is uncertain whether one should consider [139] religion to be a sort of purified magic and magic a perversion of religion or even its parasite.

Without seeking to decide this question, we shall simply point out that there is often a clear line of demarcation between religion and magic. All one needs in order to see the difference is to compare the cult of the manes with the practices of sorcery

771 used to capture the spirits of the dead. The native clearly shows
789 how much he respects the cult of the manes and, on the contrary, how much he is disturbed and terrified by the practices of the suba (1). However, many practices cannot be so clearly

1. See Chapter 7 concerning the suba.

differentiated because they have elements of both religion and magic. Such practices are held to be allowable and even desirable, illicit and hateful, depending on the point of view and the places, circumstances and persons involved.

If we keep in mind the foregoing remarks and limit ourselves to the most characteristic traits, it is possible to establish a parallel between religion and magic among the Blacks.

Both acknowledge the existence of an invisible world which is everywhere in contact with everything subject to our senses. But while religion in principle assumes man's dependence vis-à-vis this invisible world, magic operates on the theory that anything that exists comes within the power of "the one who knows" (don'na ba).

Since the Master of the Universe appears not to take much interest in what he has created, his creatures do not honor him but, rather, have recourse to the Spirits and Powers (nyana) who are willing to take a hand in human affairs. Religion organizes, for the benefit of these benevolent nyana, a cult designed to make sure of their good offices. Magic, on the other hand, forces them to execute its will.

[775] Religion and magic both believe firmly in the dual nature of man: a finite body and a soul which survives this body. When death comes, this soul goes off to join the family of manes, who are bodiless souls like it. From that vantage point the soul continues to watch over the affairs of its relatives still in the world of men. Religion regards the manes as guardian spirits and strives to make sure the continuity of their [140] will and wishes. Magic treats (1) these incorporeal souls like the

1. Especially by means which give magic the character of sorcery.

771 nyana and seeks to use them for utilitarian ends.
789 By virtue of the beliefs on which it is based, religion engenders a certain degree of morality. Magic uses its knowledge to exploit the Universe for material profit.

In both camps there are initiates. Whereas the most [791] famous adepts in magic live in a kind of isolation, where they jealously keep the secret of their practices and where they exist apart from human societies which at once honor and fear them, [794] religion, on the other hand, displays its cults, if not exactly publicly, at least in the circle of the faithful. The latter, since they are usually completely familiar with the ceremonies of the cult and with the high-priests, are the masters and most venerated members of society.

Religion receives its most reliable support from the natural family and from the communities derived from that family. Legal magic has copied these organizations in the form of brotherhoods, which Europeans call "secret societies," a kind of spiritual family in which the members are only gradually admitted to all secrets.

Whereas the religion of the manes forms the strongest link that holds together the members of a community, and represents the framework of the society, magic on the other hand cares little for this union and in fact helps to disrupt it by the hatred it engenders. Thanks to magic, the individual feels competent to challenge the community and never fails to do so.

Let us look more closely into the traits characteristic of religion and those characteristicof magic.

By studying all that concerns especially the patriarchal and family communities and the associations growing out of these communities we shall be able to see the place occupied by the religion of the manes and of the spirits, as well as the effect of magic upon the basic manifestations of the life of these communities.

789 Since magic, in a sense, envelops every act of the native, it seems to us essential, at the start, to look into its characteristics so as to facilitate the understanding of all that is to follow, which is impreganted by magic in so many ways.

789 In connection with the brotherhoods, we shall see how magic has been organized [141] in the very heart of native society and we shall observe the stability and the repercussions of its work.

Magic

778 789 [1774] Universal energy. There exist individuals who are subject to certain phenomena, as yet imperfectly known or explained, in which the human being is divided into two so that on occasion his immaterial self lives a life independent of his body in a sphere inaccessible to corporeal sense. Such a man then enters a milieu from which he brings back visions and sensations that he can only describe vaguely and frighteningly in his habitual language after he has returned to a normal waking state.

Among the Bambara, occurrences of this kind have been observed and good use has been made of them, especially in the brotherhoods. They constitute a confirmation of belief in the invisible world, as do dreams. And the Bambara sees many other indications -- which escape us -- of the existence of this extra-natural world which envelops everything and which he conceives as a force sometimes active and sometimes inert, diffused or personified. It is this energy which is, as it were, set in motion by a curse, by the extreme expression of envy called "evil eye," by luck or by misfortune. A chief's authority derives the essence of its strength from this activity. And it is the reason for honoring the dead.

This invisible force, instantly transmissible to the greatest distances, is present in all things; it exists everywhere, in everything and in everyone. It possesses or acquires a greater or lesser power in certain objects and in certain people for a stated period of time or for a temporary period. It can be beneficent or maleficent, or both in turn. The ordinary man who touches such objects or such persons will usually be struck dead or, at the least, gravely affected, as he would be if he touched a high-voltage electric current. For the initiate who knows the secret of this force and who knows how to use it, this

778 is a virtue which exalts his own faculties to such an extent that
789 it gives him a supernatural power that is terrifying to the uninitiated.

This property of transmission by contact accounts for the veneration which surrounds the possessions of eminent persons and those among the dead who [142] exercised power during their lifetime. Objects especially venerated are those that were in almost constant personal use: clothing, weapons, toilet articles.

The same property of transmission no doubt also accounts for the nature attributed to matter, which has been called continuity. Everything emanating from an object retains the occult energy within it, and, further, anything that "the man who knows" (don-na-ba) does to these detached parts affects the whole from which they came (1). That is why an undigested portion of

[787]

1. Divination by means of the kolon' kala, previously described, is allied to this belief. The bits and pieces of the deceased act as the dead man himself would do in guiding the bearers of the kolon' kala.

food, if suitably treated by the magician, can spoil the digested portion of the same food. The chronicle tells of how this theory of the continuity of matter was used against Bani. By means of hair and a sandal, stolen from him, the magician paralyzed Bani's clairvoyance and put him at Da's mercy.

791 Magicians. It is the learning of the magician which, so to speak, brings order out of the chaos of the world. In the broadest sense of the word, his art, magic, is a kind of utilization of the occult. It is true that there is no Bambara, from a chief down to the least of the slaves, who does not act as his own magician, but there are specialists and some of them very famous. Besides, not everyone can be a real magician. Natural talents give some individuals the power to penetrate the invisible world and to feel at home there. Some are initiated by genii who have taken a fancy to them, as shown in the chronicle of Biton; others learn the craft from a relative or a well-known magician, either at no cost or at great expense.

2: Monteil--157 G-5 (1902-1923) 1924 FA8 Bambara FA8

791 Every magician (soma) (2) has his own methods: one

2. A sorcerer is a suba (See Chapter 7).

may be intuitive and work from an inner light; another may operate only by deductive divination. All who lay claim to real power submit to rules which are often strange and rigorous and which dominate the most trifling activities of their lives. And all are fanatically determined to keep the secrets which, in their own eyes no less than in the eyes of the uninitiated, are the foundation of their mysterious powers.

[143] Very properly, the range of their investigations and their action is without limits, since everything is impregnated by the energy which is everywhere and in everything and which perhaps is everything, material form being merely one of its manifestations.

789 It is worthy of note that artisans are subject to the same
463 dislike as that for ill-famed magicians. It is not too hazardous
791 to deduce that manual labor once consisted of magic rites which were held to be indispensable in conquering matter. This is still evident in the case of blacksmiths and hunters.

791 Everywhere in the Sudan, blacksmiths are considered
326 and, indeed, behave like magicians. The extraction of iron is surrounded by essentially magic rites in which only blacksmiths may participate. After ritual preparation, they work naked while the job lasts and return to normal life only for a certain time after the work has been completed; even then they have to observe special rules. Their work is commonly thought to be tinged with magic. Their tools are impregnated by this invisible energy and, on certain days, the hut in which they are kept becomes a sort of temple, with the blacksmith as priest. The chronicle (1) attributes to fa Siné Dyara, a blacksmith who

1. See p. 112.

could understand the language of the birds, a role especially helpful to the Massa-si.

2; Monteil--158 G-5 (1902-1923) 1924 FA8 Bambara FA8

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791 Raffenel has given us an interesting portrait of one of these Bambara blacksmiths, whom he called father Niany, whose guest he was at Foutobi (Kaarta). He saw him act successively as fa, as priest of the manes and of the guardian spirits of the family, as doctor, and as exorcist. He was always alert, always excited and ever watching for the thousand manifestations of the invisible and hastening either to cooperate with them or to force them to do his will.

752 Here are some excerpts concerning the highly characteristic personage, father Niany:

"I saw a small child die of a snake-bite," reports Raffenel (2); "the poor creature was hideous and swollen up

2. In Nouveau voyage au pays des nègres [A New Journey to the Land of the Negroes], Vol. 1, p. 417.

like a balloon. Its mother had laid it [144] down in a field of millet which she was hoeing. A snake appeared (1) and bit the

[137]

1. "These snakes are 50 centimeters long and about 4 centimeters in diameter. Their back is gray, with very conspicuous black rings around the body. They have white bellies and a flat head rounded at the end. The part nearest the tail is covered on the upper surface by a series of vertical scales covering about a quarter of the length of the body. The tail is much smaller in diameter than the body. They like the outskirts of villages and are markedly fond of the roofs of houses." (Raffenel)

child. The mother misinterpreted its cries and offered her breast. Soon, however, the swelling became evident and the child had died within 24 hours." ....

752 "A few days after the child's death, a woman in the house was also bitten, just a step from my hut and by a similar snake. Old Niany was summoned and came at once. I was not aware that he had any knowledge of medical matters but, on seeing the confidence shown him, I realized that this was not a new experience for him.

"His medication consisted, first, of ridiculous gestures and a spate of incoherent words spoken very rapidly. Then he brought out from under his boubou [robe] a small horn containing a black and oily ointment. The injured woman, who seemed very calm, prepared her own bandage and placed the ointment on the wound, adding some ground root which the old man took from another horn. When she had finished, it was Niany's turn. He muttered some more words, put his finger into his ears and took out some stuff, which was apparently there in quantity, and carefully spread it over the ointment. The woman then arose and returned to her work.

"I watched this treatment with a lively interest since I knew that I myself might have need of it at any time. For the same reason I often asked after the woman and was always told that she was getting on well. On the third day, I was told that she was completely cured and that there had been no swelling or pain to keep her from performing her usual chores.

"The snake that had bitten her was nevertheless of [145] the same type as the one that had caused the child's death. I saw and held in my hands both snakes; I saw the remedy applied and I have faithfully described it. Are we to believe in the virtue of grigri and in the omniscience of the Aesculapius of Foutobi, or must we give an unorthodox twist to the aphorism which says that faith conquers all?

"In any case, I firmly resolved to trust myself to the learned hands of Niany if the need should arise.

"When I went to Niany to congratulate him on his remarkable cure, I reminded him of the death of the child who had been treated in the same way. The singular logic of the blacksmith's reply [811] has no doubt been encountered before: 'that's not at all strange,' he told me, 'since my remedy cures only those who believe in it and the little child did not believe.' "....

755 "(1) I have stated elsewhere that among Negro beliefs

1. Raffenel, op. cit., p. 463.

the tradition of the state of possession was carefully preserved. One evening I was present at a ceremony designed to drive a devil out of a woman's body. Father Niany, the universal man of Foutobi, was the exorcist. At the first rumor of this event, a throng converged on the woman's hut and I joined the crowd, curious to see what was going to happen. I saw a wretched woman rolling about on the ground in terrible convulsions in the midst of a circle of onlookers who let her thrash about without trying to help and merely watched her movements. There was great excitement when Niany appeared, and the circle opened to let him pass. He approached the woman, touched her, said a few words in a low voice, lifted her and placed her on a mat.

"The woman at once became calm, and father Niany, who seemed not at all impressed by his triumph, withdrew after speaking a few words in her ear. The crowd melted away, also without showing the least surprise at such complete and prompt success. I conclude that such happenings were not at all infrequent and that Niany had a special talent for driving devils out of women's bodies. I cannot [146] say what her trouble was, but when I saw her I thought that she was simply having an attack of epilepsy and I did not recognize the usual symptoms of that dreadful malady in the sort of convulsions she was having."

791 Though he was sure of his art, Niany nevertheless recog-
609 nized its hazards. There is no magician who does not find another who is more powerful. A foreigner, that unknown creature, is a danger, because he may chance to possess secrets which might invalidate the cleverest methods. That is why Niany fears Islam. He has an idea, which to us seems strange, of what Allah may be, as compared to a miscreant like himself and, being persuaded of the continuity of matter, he applies it in a manner that we shall describe in the chapter on Islam.

791 Though he may have his doubts about Islam, Niany is no
609 less suspicious of the maneuvers of the foreigner, Raffenel, who
821 is staying with him.

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"(1) One morning he came and complained bitterly that

1. Raffenel, op. cit., p. 322.

I was preventing the rain from falling and that I was causing a lot of trouble to the villagers. I could not imagine, at first, why he was thus berating me, but he explained. It was his considered opinion that the rain was very much annoyed with me for being too much interested in it. I was watching the raindrops and examining the clouds, and so the rain was getting its vengeance by refusing to fall. Father Niany resented my thermometers too, but his principal target was my barometer, to which he attributed all sorts of evil designs.

"On the following day he returned to the charge, accompanied by a deputation of farmers carrying their agricultural tools on their shoulders.

"'We've thought it all over,' said Niany, 'and we have decided that since you can stop the rain, you can also make it fall again. Therefore we have come to ask you to speak to the rain in our name.'" ....

"Two days later there came another deputation, but one which, this time, looked threatening. Among them were some [147] new faces.

"'We want you to make it rain,' said the leaders, with an angry glance at my barometer, 'for we have already waited too long. You will never convince us that what you do with your machines (they pointed at my instruments), while you look up into the air and write down the grigri, is innocent. Never before in this country, has the rain held off so long from falling and no one has ever before done what you're doing. Manage it as you will, but we must have rain by tonight.'

"The sky was filled with heavy black clouds which reassured me. ... An hour later the rain fell, but those wretches, no doubt fearing that my presence would interfere with its good intentions, pushed me unceremoniously into my hut and shut the door. By this ridiculous step they prevented me from watching the progress of a wonderful storm and noting the barometric pressure changes.

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609
821 "Can one imagine being given such orders? All that was left for them to do was to ask for the moon and the stars."

791 Niany is typical of many Sudanese blacksmiths, at least
326 of those who actually practice their trade, and it is no wonder that the natives keep people of that caste at a safe distance and show them consideration, fear and a degree of scorn. For the Blacks, people as well as things connected with magic are inclined to take many forms.

791 Hunters also are magicians. One need only see a hunter
224 start off to recognize that this is true. His person and his equipment are covered with amulets that constitute a covering as well as an arsenal of magic weapons.

825 The Blacks have a different idea of animals from ours;
778 they too are powers with which one has to reckon. In proof of this, there is no animal, however tiny, which cannot be, at some time or other, very dangerous and therefore worthy of respect. So animals are addressed as "master" or "lord." The animals always to be feared are never called anything else:
[552] wara-ba means lion; sa-ma, elephant; ma-li, hippopotamus; bam-ma, [148] crocodile. Etymologically, all these names indicate "master" or "lord."

These terms are not meaningless; they attest a belief that supernatural power is incorporated in animal species. The attentions paid to animals have no other purpose than that of
825 conciliating the good-will of this power or, at least, of avoiding
789 its wrath. The common practice of using animal debris (skin,
[237] horns, tail, hair, offal, etc.) to make magic charms is an application of the principle of continuity of matter, of the individual and of the virtues peculiar to them. A rabbit's foot is tied to a
[843] pregnant woman's side in order to hasten the child's arrival; a small bag of lion skin will make the child brave and strong.

231 It seems likely that the domestication of animals is a
552 happy result of magic practices. These tamed creatures are held to be "weak ones" and are treated as such. However, some of
825 their names show a trace of the esteem in which they were once held and which is still shown on occasion: fa-li meaning "donkey" derives from fa meaning "powerful," just as nya-ri meaning "cat" derives from nya and has the same meaning, along with ba Meaning "goat."

231 825 meaning "goat." In the case of the goat, there remain some customs that are very suggestive. Its milk is the basis of the most solemn of all oaths, that of fraternization; milk is also used to put out fires started by lightning and the hide is used to make sandals worn by widows during the period of mourning. The chronicle tells us that a certain dish made of a goat's head gives rise to the chief's power and sustains it (1). In spite of all

1. See p. 31, in connection with Dina Wara.

this, the goat shares with the donkey a general scorn and they are considered to be the born companions of slaves. This is perhaps why some people refuse to allow either animal to come into the house. Indeed, it is believed that a rich and powerful man can be ruined if either of these animals enters his house or, even worse, if he touches them.

718 791 754 Magician's work. So it is that man is immersed in a strange fluid. In the final analysis, everything, man included, [149] is merely a manifestation of this fluid. Currents and eddies have all forms of life at their mercy, and only the strongest are able to resist, control and even acquire in the struggle greater power than they would otherwise display. "The one who knows" can avoid or follow this chaotic movement; he can control himself and others. He is the real "master" (soma) and he alone can utilize this ever present and ever powerful invisible world.

754 What makes a magician can be described by a single term: the magic weapon, to be used for defense as well as for attack, and indeed for anything else, by one who knows how to use it. Let us consider some of the examples in the Bambara arsenal.

For anyone who wants to destroy an enemy, the so ma sama (lit., "bundle of the person of the house") is a valuable weapon. It is a mysterious powder, kept in the horn of a hind, in which is placed a small stick. It is used in the following manner: let us suppose that a Bambara wishes to harm a person who is passing through the village. The Bambara secretly takes

754 the tiny horn in his hand, grasps the stick, and, after uttering maledictions against the person in question and saying his name, places the stick on his tongue, first lengthwise and then crosswise. After this manipulation in the pattern of a cross, he replaces the stick in the horn. When the traveler returns to his own village, the charm will take effect. If, on arriving, he is so careless as to sit down anywhere but on the bare ground, he will die. If he does sit on the bare ground, he will be safe.

If it is not the traveler whom our man wishes to harm, but someone in the traveler's village, the Bambara, after having gone through the afore-mentioned ritual proceedings against the enemy, will then seek out the traveler and engage him in polite conversation. Just as the traveler is about to take his leave, he will say to him: "Give my regards to So-and-So." When the returned traveler delivers the message, the person receiving it will suffer no harm if he repays in exactly the same way the compliments that have been conveyed to him; however, if he merely says "maraba" (thank you), he will die at once.

The so ma sama belongs to a category of magic weapons, which are especially and deservedly feared and which [150] the Bambara include under the general name, korti. There are endless korti, usually powders made of every imaginable and often repugnant ingredient (snake venom, the dung of wild animals, putrefied entrails from all kinds of corpses, etc.).

[278] Here, for instance, is the procedure used to make su-mugu. A very dry stalk of millet is inserted into the intestine of a dead animal through the anus and is left there long enough for it to become impregnated with the toxins produced by cadavers; it is then withdrawn and thoroughly dried before being pulverized. The resulting powder is kept in horns or boxes, either as it is or mixed with an ointment.

Many of these powders are put into the food or drink to be consumed by the victim. Various methods are employed for this purpose. A ready method is for the harmful powder -- notably su-mugu -- to be placed under a fingernail; then the

754 operator can drop it into the food or drink unobtrusively while serving the victim.

Some of the powders are tossed at the victim with a quick fillip and enter the skin through the tiniest abrasions.

All this is accompanied by the direst curses and constitutes what is known as korti su. These poisons act in various ways, some quickly and others slowly. It is said that the su-mugu only takes effect gradually. Its action is to be seen in a certain amount of swelling of the abdomen, which causes death within a few months. There is not a single native who is not terrified of the korti, and there are Europeans who have experienced the dangerous effects.

Some korti are not the effect of manipulations but rather of true spirits of evil set in motion by magic practices. The following is an example of the type called donna, which includes also the so ma sama and su-mugu. The symbol or material representation (boli) of this donna is a kind of ball, not very large. In order to use it, the operator places it on the blade of one of the native mattocks called daba. The spell is worked at night. The spirit is attracted by the sacrifice of a chicken and offerings of kola. The operator utters his curses against the people -- often far away -- and asks the spirit [151] to undertake vengeance. If the spirit agrees, a sound is heard which resembles the noise made by the flight of a dung bettle (1).

[825]

1. I have been told that this is the reason for the fear certain Bambara have of this insect.

This is the genie starting off on its mission. He will fatally sting the enemy during sleep and then return, announced by the same noise of flight as was heard on his departure. If the imitator should go to sleep while the spirit is away, he will himself be killed in the same way as the victim. He must stay awake for the spirit's return and again sacrifice chicken and kola to him.

754 The korti are counteracted by the kana, which are de-
755 fensive weapons, more particularly, curative. Based on the same principles and using similar ingredients, they are essentially

754 [755] designed to neutralize the effects of the korti. It was a kana ' that father Niany used against the snake bites (2).

2. See above, pp. 157-159.

A third category of magic weapons is that of the siri-kun' or "knots." Though not itself a genie, the siri-kun' is at least dependent on a genie, and it is by addressing a vow or an oath to the genie that one succeeds in obtaining revenge or avoiding the vengeance of another.

As its name would suggest, the siri-kun' is something that binds, that is, something that forces or paralyzes. It receives the obligations undertaken and sworn to by individuals in its presence and it will punish perjury. It renders helpless and paralyzes anyone against whom its intervention has been asked.

I have myself seen Bambara clutching a few bits of straw when they came to me to settle some lawsuit or other. They were following instructions and trying to make me submit to the siri-kun', that is, to paralyze my capacity to take action against them (3).

3. The chronicle of Ségou tells of a similar action by Ngolo against Mamari (see p. 53).

All these dealings in criminal magic are performed in an atmosphere of the most disconcerting trickery and hypocrisy; often the most fawning neighbors are the most to be feared. That is why a Bambara [152] likes to have the assurance of a "powerful protector" (dyigi seme). He seeks him and often thinks that he has found him in the brotherhood of one of those all-powerful genii of which we shall have occasion to speak.

788 Rites. There is no magic without appropriate rites, which must be strictly observed. Any negligence makes the operation useless, even dangerous, for the performer. We saw how the initiator who went to sleep while awaiting the return of the spirit he had invoked was promptly killed by the spirit

788 as it returned to its point of departure. This was presumably because the operator had not done what was necessary to assure the reintegration of the supernatural power.

[778] There are thus rites that set in motion this universal energy, whether diffuse or personified -- rites that channel, direct and orientate this energy so that not only it will reach the goal sought, but also it will be kept from straying from the desired route, thus harming the very person it is supposed to aid. Similar means are used to forestall the misdeeds which may be committed by an agent mistakenly invoked. When Ngolo had aroused his son Ntyi's ambition, he thought he could conjure away its effects by sacrificing his two grandsons, Ntyi's own children.

Those actions that call upon, guide and reintegrate this universal energy, whether diffuse or personified, are what we call rites.

788 754 During the oath using kola, the operator has in his hand a sharp object (pin, thorn, etc.) with which he pricks or stabs through the nut, saying, for instance: "Take my heart and my liver and kill me, if...." (i ka ne son' ni m bien' ta, ni ...). These pricks indicate to the "power" with which the operator is concerned that, if necessary, it should take vengeance by piercing the guilty person, just as the kola is pierced by the pin (1).

1. The shirt sent by Ma-n-son to Forokoro was first pricked with a needle (p. 120).

In curses, all the imprecations used are so many indications, indeed sometimes instructions (2), as to how the [153] spirit invoked is requested to act.

[575] 2. At the time of admission to the brotherhoods, the most frightful threats are made against the traitor or perjuror in the form of curses indicating to the avenging spirit how he should punish: "may it enter through your anus and come out through your mouth, etc."

invoked is requested or required to act.

There are times when on the contrary, the native is inclined to hold the energy in check, in order to avoid the harm that would result from this sort of action. For this purpose he abstains from doing certain things; this is the origin of many taboos (tne).

The acquisition of magic power in order to gain strength or to be able to act so as to avoid being affected by magic or, finally, to be able to get rid of magic power when one is permeated by it to a dangerous point -- all these involve appropriate actions or rites whose forms and conditions only magicians or others gifted with intuition can determine.

The chronicle shows that chiefs make use of magic to try to strengthen the supernatural power which is the basis of their position. Dina Wara secretly ate a special dish made of a goat's head; Biton took special baths, whose virtues Ngolo appropriated by trickery just as Biton had done with respect to Dina Wara, his brother-in-law. All sorts of comparable practices accounted for the increase of Ngolo's "luck," that modal quality of supernatural power which confers a degree of magic potency on the possessor. This so-called "luck" has, as it were, a kind of radiation, which confers special good fortune on whatever it touches. That is why the marabouts advised Biton to live in close proximity to Ngolo so as to take advantage of the favorable atmosphere.

This energy is attached to everything and, especially, to objects that come into direct contact with anything impregnated with it. What one wears on oneself thus becomes a sort of accumulator, and that is why the objects left upon a powerful person's death are so carefully preserved and constitute the most valuable part of his legacy. The chronicle tells us with what veneration the cap and weapons belonging to Biton were regarded.

Magic force is therefore acquired by means of appropriate practices indicated by magicians; one shares its benefits by living near those entrusted with it by applying to oneself what comes from such privileged persons. Here again is a result of the continuity of matter. Whatever the case, anything

778 emanating from the person or object impregnated with magic
789 force acts as if it were a part of that person or object. Often
[788] the magician or [154] ritual officiant spits on the person or object involved in the rites. This is a means of transferring one person's fluid to another.

Conversely, it is vital to know how to avoid contact
751 with, or even emanations from, a maleficent magic force.
789 That is the reason for the great number of mysterious magic
754 practices and the secret of the innumerable amulets that form so many shields, to be placed presumably where they will best protect against any blow. Therefore it is the magician's prerogative to make amulets and to prescribe the conduct necessary to preserve their efficacy.

It should be noted that protection set up against a given person is good only for him and is useless against a successor, for instance. The chronicle tells us that Bani, chief of Samba-Nyana, was successful in using certain artifices to prevent Ma-n-son from conquering him. But, kept in ignorance of Ma-n-son's death and having taken no precautions against Da, Ma-n-son's son and successor, Bani was conquered by Da, against whom his artifices availed nothing.

If one is caught in spite of precautions, what is to be done? Everyone is afflicted in one way or another in any event. A Bambara is always inclined to believe in some sort of supernatural intervention. He has on hand some sort of remedy, but more often he resorts to a "seer" for guidance or, if the case requires, to a magician's skill.

Native medicine is a mass of magic formulas and of remedies strikingly reminiscent of the pharmacopeia of the Middle Ages (see, in the foregoing, father Niany's operations).

[571] The individual does not live as an isolated unit but
789 rather as an integral part of a community. In the society in
783 which he lives, however restricted it may be, he progressively occupies various situations. On both physical and moral levels, he undergoes changes and, depending on circumstances, whether fortunate or unfortunate happenings, changes take place within him. In short, his magic potential varies. These variations are always believed to concern the entire milieu, upon which they may (in the case of illness or death) have disastrous effects.

789 The individual is therefore required to [155] undergo proper
783 treatment to return him to his normal, harmless state.

789 From this point of view, social life seems to give rise
788 to a series of rites involving the disintegration and reintegra-
182 tion or the aggregation of the individual in relation to the group in which he lives. Birth, circumcision, marriage, illness, death and the performance of certain trades are all modes of existence, whose beginning and end usually involve three stages: separation from the common milieu, accomplishment of the act, and reintegration into the former milieu or aggregation in a new milieu. Between the first and the second state as well as between the third and the fourth there exists usually a kind of negative interval which we call marginal. This system, which comes to light upon an analysis of multiple facts, is actually subject to modifications or alterations which can change its physiognomy. Nevertheless, the basis of these ritual sequences is so well established that by comparing external manifestations with the theoretical system it is possible to understand them better and to restore to some of them, which have become badly mutilated, their real meaning, which the native is usually, if not always, unable to explain or to define precisely.

A detailed study of institutions will give an opportunity for concrete analysis of these ritual sequences, which a kind of age-old empiricism has transformed into laws of a sort. They have come to represent that part of custom which has acquired a kind of permanence by virtue of public acceptance.

It is apparent everywhere among the Blacks that events of a general character (birth, coming-of-age, marriage, illness and death) are surrounded by ritual practices that vary outwardly from place to place but may all fit our theoretical system of three stages with marginal periods. All denote a common basis of magic and all derive from a long-tried empiricism which has given them a peculiar and relatively stable physiognomy in terms of the milieu with which the rites are connected.

571 What we have just said about individuals must also ap-
182 ply to collective groups: the latter deal with each other or

571 with individuals in the same way as individuals deal with each other. They are not only moral persons, as we put it, 182 but they are truly persons, [156] as evidenced by the Blacks' impulsive need for anthropomorphism.

812 Let us note, finally, that a Black does not abstract himself from surrounding nature; nor has he reached the stage of development at which man regards himself as a kind of intermediary between the natural and the supernatural. The Black is an integral part of nature and that is why he treats it like himself. Therefore, natural phenomena are subjected on his behalf to the same kind of ritual sequences as those followed in his own behavior.

Chapter 3

Communities

1. General Considerations

114 Native society is not simple, and Europeans studying 631 these countries have used terminology which, not being defined, has obscured reality.

In particular, they have used the terms "kingdom" and "empire" to describe Sudanese states, and both authors and readers have taken these expressions to imply a social organization more or less analogous to those meant by these words in our country.

631 These empires or kingdoms, however, are simply clans, i.e., political groups that have imposed their authority on other groups whose members then become their tributaries, members of a caste, or slaves. Such an empire, if one wishes to use this term, has no exact geographical boundaries or, if one prefers, its boundaries are constantly changing. Furthermore, the country embraced by this term has two parts: territories which may be said to be under direct administration, in which the authority of the clan is directly imposed; and those territories whose position with respect to the ruling clan

631 is highly variable, ranging from complete subjection to quasi-independence.

565 [563] The imperial clan, or, if one prefers, the dominant clan, most often prevails over people of races other than that of its own members; frequently this clan itself includes, at least originally, diverse ethnic elements. [158]

If such heterogeneous associates are to live side by side without clashing, they must have a large body of common customs, and this indeed is the case. Wherever one studies it, the native milieu resembles a compartmented area whose individual sections seem, at first glance, to be isolated. At the top of the social structure there is a kind of nobility composed of the head of the clan, his family, and then the families of the clan; next come the free men, simply free or members of castes; and finally the slaves. In actual fact, a continual reciprocal movement between these elements welds all of them together.

614 596 The fact is that the whole social body exists only through the severity of the life of the cells that compose it: the families. Among other characteristics, these families are very jealous of their respective independence; nevertheless, they are closely allied among themselves even as they freely absorb the foreign element constituted by the slaves.

It is, therefore, essential to concentrate our attention on the family cell in order to understand the essential element of native social life. This is all the more true in that all the native collectivities are, so to speak, modeled on the organization of the family.

The Bambara language has no word exactly equivalent to our word "family" in the legal sense (1). Different names

1. This is why we prefer the term "community," but in view of the remarks made here, the use of the word "family" will not be ambiguous.

are used to designate the collectivity under the authority of the

614 fa (2), according to whether the group itself is meant or the
596

> 2. Fa means "lord," "master," "patriarch," or "father," depending on the circumstances. Within the family, it corresponds very closely to the titular incumbent of such rank and high office who led Mistral [Ed., a French poet] to call his father: "my lord father," or "the master."

place which this collectivity occupies.

571 Let us note at the start that any collectivity forming
575 an association is a ton'; thus, this is the case for all persons under the authority of one fa, and from this point of view, each of them is a ton'-den', literally, "a child of the ton'," i.e., member of the ton'. The word ton'-denya derives from the same word and is commonly used as a collective designation for all the members of the same ton'. This is the equivalent of the French word [159] société [Ed., society, association] or confrérie [Ed., brotherhood, confraternity]. The head of the ton' is the ton'-tigi, a term by which honor is paid to the head of an important family, and which, in some respects, is the equivalent of our [Ed., French] words notable [Ed., person of note, dignitary] and notabilité [Ed., notability, principal person].

614 If one considers the family as an association of the
596 issue of the same parents, the term ba-denya is used, derived from ba-den'. Since the word ba means "mother" and, in the broad sense, "progenitor," mother or father, the word ba-den' is used for any of their issue, hence "children," "brothers," and "relatives," while ba-denya means "fraternity" "kinship."

Although, in the restricted sense in which we shall use it, the word ton' refers to anyone living under the authority of the ton'-tigi, whether or not he is connected by descent, the more exact term, ba-denya, refers only to those whose

614 descent is in the male line from a common male ancestor or,
596 even more narrowly, to uterine brothers and sisters. The two terms, ton' and ba-denya, have a meaning which differs from that of our word "family," which is defined in our legal terminology as "the totality of persons united by ties of kinship or affinity."

592 The Bambara family lives in huts which are connected by an enclosure or completely surrounded by the enclosure when its two extremities are supported on a kind of vestibule (blon'). The enclosure is called gwa in some dialects, whence the name gwa-tigi, a term of respect for the fa, master of the house.

Gwa, therefore, means "family" only indirectly, and it is very difficult to reconcile this word with the word "family," since the gwa houses people who are not members of the family and, on the other hand, does not house all the members of the family.

Besides, it should be noted that the word gwa in its meaning of "enclosure" is used to designate all sorts of agglomerations likewise enclosed, notably livestock folds. The variants wore and gore, which are more specifically applied to these folds, may also be used, and actually are in some regions, in forming the names of settlements. The form kore or kori, common in expressions of courtesy, has the same meaning; kori ka kende? means literally, "Is all the house well?" [160]

In some Bambara dialects, the word so is used instead of gwa. The primary meaning of the word so is also "enclosure" and, more especially, "hedge of thorns," by which all primitive establishments are protected; so-tigi has the same meaning as gwa-tigi. The word so also means "household," i.e., the contents of a house, including all within it, whether on a permanent or temporary basis and whether or not belonging to the family.

It is common practice, however, to use so and gwa in the narrow sense of "people of the family," i.e., those living under the authority of the same fa.

592 It may be said, in short, that there is no exact term
601 for designating expressly and exclusively a collectivity
596

592 comparable to what our law defines as a family. In fact, the
601 four terms just discussed, ton', ba-denya, gwa, and so, are
596 all used for the purpose. It is what is intended by their use that gives them their meaning, and depending on the region, each term has a meaning made precise by usage.

592 The dwelling of the Bambara family usually includes
342 a fairly large number of huts of various kinds. Some are cylindrical and built of native masonry with a conical straw roof and, for a door, a slit or opening which does not extend all the way to the ground. Others are parallelepiped, made of native masonry, and ordinarily also provided with no opening except the door.

Shelters (gwa), consisting of flat straw roofs supported on forked sticks, are usually placed haphazardly or wherever the master of the house wants them and are certainly not governed by any traditional rules or fixed orientation. All these dwellings or out-buildings are enclosed by either a clay wall
[343] or an unbroken hedge whose two ends are supported by the walls of the hut called blon' which serves as a vestibule for the establishment.

[178] The altar of the ancestors and of the household gods is found in the blon'.

The houses of notables are somewhat more elaborately arranged: instead of a single inner court, there are two, three, or even more, sometimes graduated in extent. The master arranges his people in such a way as to divide into sections the heterogeneous elements gathered together under his protection.
512 The domestic servants and the young [161] men, the women, girls, and small children, and finally the eventual successor are, as it were, fenced apart in their own blocks of dwellings, while the fa himself is to be found in impressive isolation, which lends weight to his authority.

592 Among great personages, especially among heads of clans, this arrangement is the rule, and their isolation deep in
712 the interior is virtually a security measure. In the old days a kind of fortress or redoubt, the tata, was built in the center of the royal residence. Gunpowder, weapons, and all the means of defense were kept there, and it was no easy matter to capture

592 this well-built structure in the midst of the inextricable maze
[712] of surrounding huts which were themselves surrounded by a solid wall of native masonry.

[565] The people of a single household are classed in three categories: free men (woro-u), members of castes (nya-maka-la), and slaves (dyon'-u).

596 The freemen. Within the family, free persons are:
561 the men (tye-u), i.e., circumcised males; the moso-u, ex-
601 cised women; the den'-u, children of both sexes.

In accordance with their influence (faya) in the family, the men are called koro-u, old men, elders, or kamalen'-u, young masters. Among the old men the bina (uncles), brothers of the fa, hold the preponderant position; they form a kind of limited family council and generally work for the welfare of the community under the direction of the fa.

Among the women the following distinctions are made: the mothers, i.e., women under the control of a husband and who are actually mothers of children, ba-u; old women, moso-koro-u; grandmothers, mama-u; and finally unmarried girls, moso-de-u.

All children are called de unless they are specifically identified as de-n-ke, "boy," or de-moso or deni, "girl."

601 Furthermore, every male with any influence (faya) in the family, no matter to what extent, is called fa (1): [162]

1. In one way or another, therefore, every male is fa, since he exercises or will one day exercise faya. The word fa is jokingly applied even to very young boys just as ba is applied to little girls. These words may be used just like our familiar expressions when we say "Father X" or "Mother X" with no reference intended to any real state of fatherhood or motherhood.

In any case, the words fa and ba are also used as terms of respect, just as we

601

say "master" or "mistress." One may even say that in ordinary usage fa and ba are equivalent to our "Monsieur" and "Madame," with all the shades of meaning these entail.

father by his children; husband by his wives; grandfather by all his descendants; and uncle by those who have claims on the family property.

The genitor, procreator, father is the wolo-fa, and all his descendants alike are called de in relation to him.

There is, properly speaking, no term meaning brother or sister, but one can say baden'-ma-ke or baden'-ma-moso. Children of the same father call each other koro (old man) or dua, duani (young), respectively, in order to indicate the eldest and the youngest and to designate agnate or uterine relationship. Strictly speaking, duani is the younger uterine brother.

There is no special term for nephew; brother's sons are de because they are under their uncle's authority, just as his own children are. Sister's sons do not belong to their mother's family, and they are de to their father's family.

Cousins, insofar as they are the issue of brothers, are also de in that they are all under the authority of the same fa, and since they consider themselves brothers, they call each other koro or duani, respectively.

601 602 There is a kind of cousin relationship between the children of a brother and a sister, with some precedence accorded to the former.

A kind of kinship likewise exists between the children of two sisters.

In short, true kinship exists only between persons who are dependent on the same fa.

601 As for affinals, they are all covered by the single term biran', literally, "one with whom we are in agreement."

The women, moso-u, as co-wives, call one another sina-u. With respect to their children and the other children in

60 the household, they are ba-u (mothers), and the title ba is commonly used out of deference or respect. Very old women are addressed as mama, "grandmother" or "ancestress." [163]

564 Members of castes. These are free men who are destitute and form a kind of clientage of important families. We shall discuss them later on.

567 Slaves. Only slaves entrusted with special duties lived in the house. When a master discerned qualities in a new slave that might make him useful in the house, he kept him in his own service and often treated him well and generously. Custom gave the children of such a slave a privileged position; since they were "born in the house" (wolo-so-u, they could not be sold except in the case of extreme necessity. All confidential servants were recruited from the wolo-so-u, and the eldest, most experienced, and most favored often acquired great influence in family affairs. They knew more about the secrets and resources of the community than most of its members.

Another category of slaves is made up of those who after three generations were ipso facto freed (dyongoron'-u). They have played an important role in native society.

2. The Patriarchal Community or Patriarchy

769 The ancestral spirit-god. In order to view a custom from its most expressive aspect, it is necessary to observe it in its fullest development and, at the same time, to note anything adventitious or foreign that modifies its appearance and procedure or alters its basis.

The cult of the ancestors is the very essence of the family, and the most characteristic manifestation of this cult is the funeral ceremonies for the head of a family, the patriarch (fa). Here, one is present at the transformation of a man into an ancestral spirit-god within the span of 40 days.

This period is an interval during which a link between the past and the future is formed in the present, whereby

769 continuity is established between the living and the dead, with the deceased acting as intermediary. Religious customs, magic, and civil law, all are intermingled in apparent disorder, and the casual or inexperienced observer is all the more confused inasmuch as diverse accessory or circumstantial features mask the essentials in being more obvious. [164]

Does not the same sort of confusion confront a foreigner in France who sees the funeral of a prominent citizen? If he is uninformed, how is he to recognize the religious rites and civil requirements which form the common basis of all funeral ceremonies, for the great and for the humble, brought to their highest development for the one, reduced to their absolute minimum for the other.

764 Therefore, the important thing to show here is the substratum on which all funeral observances rest. For the sake of clarity, we shall divide the period of 40 days into four phases: (a) from death to burial; (b) burial; (c) the funeral celebration; (d) the period of mourning.

763 (a) From death to burial. As soon as death occurs, the fact is announced to everyone by appropriate means.

The lamentations of the women burst forth, and this spreads the news in the immediate vicinity, while gunshots inform the whole settlement. These acts have something of the ritual that was carried out when a Bambara died in war. Raffenel has given us a remarkable picture of it.

763 "When a Bambara died in battle, three gunshots, fired near the door of his hut by one of his companions-at-arms, an-
152 nounced his death to the family. Wailings answered this announcement, and the weeping women of the village came out of all the huts to run to the house from where the signal had been heard. Everything was abandoned in order to share in this sorrow. First they wept, and then they ran to find out where the mourning was...

763 "The warrior charged with this mission arrived at the door at a gallop. He pulled up his horse, slowly loaded his gun, shot it, reloaded it again, then again... , and when the third shot had rung out, he rode off with equal speed, without uttering a word, without giving a single detail... Two shots announced enslavement."

763 A gunshot today most likely signals the death of a hunter or the father of a hunter. In any case, however, there are always cries and vociferations by [165] the women, who are joined by their friends, relatives, and neighbors.

Horsemen ride off to notify any of the sons of the deceased who are away.

[567] Meanwhile, the chief of the slaves, the major-domo, the confidential agent, or a friend or neighbor of the deceased goes to inform the chief and the principal men in the village.

764 These personages come to the mortuary house at once, spear in hand. After being received by the man temporarily in charge of the house, they go to the deceased to discover his identity and at the same time express their condolences to the family represented by the person who received them; then they withdraw.

In the mortuary hut silence descends while the women prepare the body. They wash it with warm water usually [824] scented with basil, su-ko-la (Ocimum album and febrifugum); they dry it and wrap it in pieces of native white cotton material or else dress it in its own garments, likewise white. A mat [285] of coarse straw (tyekala, kara) is placed in the middle of the room. A fine, flexible mat made of iphène leaves is put on top of it, and the women lay out the corpse on the second mat. Sometimes they place a grindstone on the abdomen to keep it from swelling.

When these preparations are completed, the women, [352 516] dressed in white native cloth, sit down in the native fashion on tiny stools in the mortuary hut. Those who come in from outside give evidence of terrible grief: they cry out, they weep, [152] they cover their heads with a bit of cloth and hurry toward the mortuary hut. As soon as they enter, they become quiet and stop weeping.

152 764 767 Among the Bambara grief is never silent; it is customary to show it overtly. As soon as there is a crowd, the singing begins in rhythm to the clapping of hands. One person or another will be inspired to sing of the achievements and virtues of the deceased. Professional weepers and mourners mingle with the crowd, guiding and gradually encouraging the noisy display.

764 The provisional master takes his place at the door or inside the blon', the vestibule of the house, and receives the condolences. [166]

Several days elapse between death and burial in order to give distant or absent relatives time to arrive. During this period the funeral songs become more and more elaborate and [533] are left to professional singers who are accompanied by various instruments: tom-toms, xylophones (bala), guitars. The singers, dancers, and mourners exert themselves all the more if they think there will be substantial rewards.

The children of the house (den'-u, de-u) are allowed a good deal of freedom during this period, as though the authority which had curbed them had ended with the life of the deceased. They are allowed to take hens and goats, to eat lavishly, sing, dance, and generally rejoice.

On the night preceding the burial, the deceased is placed outside under a shelter (gwa); the songs and dances [857] continue. It is customary for the children (de-u) of the house, led by the professional members of the funeral orchestra, to take part in the singing and dancing.

Relatives, friends, neighbors, and persons obligated to the family are expected to bring offerings in proportion to their rank or indebtedness so as to contribute to the meals and to [689] the funeral alms. This is a very strict obligation; any failure to comply not only shows a lack of respect for the dead, but is also an offense which the family must avenge. The chronicle of Ségou bears witness to this fact.

763 764 Along with the religious ceremonies, events of an entirely different nature take place. If the death should seem in any way suspicious, it is the duty of the family to investigate the matter without delay. It is particularly the heir presumptive, if he is present, who is required to take steps at once to clarify the matter; he questions the ancestors and consults seers and magicians. The funeral ceremonies are sometimes dominated and even conditioned by the results of these investigations and consultations. At the very least, it would be essential to obtain the lifting of the interdict imposed on the

763 deceased in case he had been killed by a genie (nyana). Sacri-
764 fices, alms, or the payment of a fine are necessary in that event, along with intervention by the priest of the nyana in question.

764 Most often, the body is turned over to a priest (nyana-n-tigi) [167] if the deceased was a member of a brotherhood.

[735] In any event, it is customary to give alms at the crossroads near the village.

Further, the death of the fa puts an end (1) to the au-

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.357 1. When a king of Kaarta died, the interruption in sovereignty often gave rise to serious anarchic disturbances.

thority held by him, and this may have serious consequences, since for the moment everyone is virtually independent. That is why the servitor who had the master's confidence and who actually ran the establishment retains his role after taking certain precautions (2). In particular he must make sure that the

2. This was the role that Ngolo Dyâra was seeking when he asked to be placed as "guard at the master's door."

movable property of the deceased is not carried off. He is familiar with these things, and he is the guardian responsible for them. He makes the women return the gold jewelry and valuable fabrics, puts everything in a safe place, and makes an inventory in the presence of the heir presumptive.

764 (b) Burial. The deceased may be buried in the ground within his hut or at least in a corner of his establishment. In former times there was a cemetery outside the village, often near the grove of the nyana dugu-da-siri (guardian genie of the village), and in such cases it was apparent that the more important the deceased, the nearer his tomb to the sacred place.

766 For persons of distinction there is usually a special kind
764 of grave. It is about two meters long, and while the opening

764 is two or three meters wide at the surface of the ground, it is
766 barely a meter wide at a depth of a meter and a half. Three of its walls are vertical, and the fourth is sloping. At the bottom and along the whole length of this fourth side, a hollow is prepared to receive the body, which is placed on its right side with the head toward the south if the deceased is a man, and to the north in the case of a woman.

764 It is usual for the priests of the brotherhoods to dig the grave. In the course of their work, following a special ritual, they collect various elements for [168] their magic. In any case, it is regarded as dangerous to handle anything having to do with death, and only a priest can do it with impunity.

When the time for burial is at hand, the touching ceremony of farewell to the dead takes place under the direction of the principal gravedigger. Wrapped in the mats on which it lay in the house, the body is placed under a shelter (geva) in the courtyard of the house. Everyone in turn pays his respects to the deceased and asks pardon. Everyone in turn, from the eldest to the youngest, comes forward, accusing himself of failings and faults and begging the deceased to grant him protection. All this is done through the mediation of the principal gravedigger who ceaselessly intones: "Pardon us! Do not be angry; we loved you and respected you; be happy and protect us!" Then everyone chants in unison: "Give us rain in the winter, make our harvests abundant; bring prosperity to our houses, and give us many children, wives, and wealth."

When this ceremony has come to an end, the gravediggers lift the corpse to their shoulders and, preceded by the weeping and lamenting children (de-u) and followed by the
[482] crowd of relatives, friends, and neighbors, they set off at a fast pace, almost on the run, toward the tomb. There, the body is put down beside the grave; the men stand around it with the women behind them. The sons of the deceased go down into the grave, open the mat, take hold of the body, and place it in the niche. They tear loose a corner of the shroud or shirt and hand the end of this torn fragment to someone present who holds it outside the grave. With wooden scoops or sun-dried tiles they

764 close the opening of the niche and carefully fill any cracks with earth moistened and kneaded on the spot.

During all this the women sing in a low voice and clap their hands, accompanied by muffled drums.

When all is done, the sons of the deceased come out of the excavation, and the principal gravedigger comes forward with his spade upside down on his shoulder and holding a gourd full of water in his hand. Silence falls, and the women and drummers are still. He pours some water at the head of the grave, saying: "See this water. Do not be angry, pardon [169] us, give us rain in the winter and an abundant harvest. May the wind blow from the east or from the west, from the north or from the south, as is best for us. Give us long life, many descendants, wives, and wealth." And the throng replies: "So be it (o de ka ke)."

With the back side of their spades the gravediggers then fill in the excavation. The women resume their singing in rhythm with the clapping of hands, and accompanied by subdued drums, they say: "Our fa is dead, but he will return! Young men, fill in the grave well so that no sorcerer (suba), no hyena, no wild beast can carry away the corpse."

764 778 789 When the grave is filled in, the person holding the strip of material still attached to the shroud pulls it so that it breaks. This bit of cloth is a precious relic for use in various magical performances. The magical bands called tafe are made from it and are tied around the waist to protect one from back ailments and spectral apparitions (1).

1. These are a few of the innumerable examples of magic practices which in the most diverse forms accompany all important activities.

The coarse mat which had served as a bed for the deceased is put upon the grave, along with a pair of his old sandals and his water jug. The finer mat is usually given to a friend or to a family, and it is then burned outside the village (1) [Ed., see footnote above].

764 Burials are never willingly held on either Wednesday or
789 Saturday (1) [Ed., see footnote above].

Finally, a small white chicken (2) to ward off bad luck

2. If the corpse is a woman, a fertilized egg is used.

is sometimes put into the niche just before it is closed off (1) [Ed., see footnote 1 above].

Upon returning from the burial, someone clubs the dead man's dog (1) [Ed., see footnote 1 above], unless he left express orders to the contrary. Some Bambara even go so far
[554] as to buy a dog with this posthumous honor in mind. This seems to be another magic practice to exorcise the ghost of the deceased (1) [Ed., see footnote 1 above].

When they have returned to the house, the brothers-in-law of the deceased eat the national dish, millet mush (to). When they leave for their homes, each is given a rooster or a hen in the name of the deceased, which they must eat en route before they reach home. If the fowl [170] were not eaten until they reached their villages, it would arouse the dead man's vengeance; his ghost (nyama) would haunt these impious persons. This too seems to be another magic practice to counteract the evil effects of death.

764 (c) The funeral celebration. As soon as the death has
431 been announced, it is the duty of every relative, neighbor, friend, or anyone under any sort of obligation to the deceased to bring an offering in proportion to his rank or degree of obligation for the purpose of honoring the dead (1).

1. We noted earlier the sanctions applied at the funerals of Biton and Ngolo.

In certain cases, the total of these offerings is very large. The chronicle of Ségou tells us that when Ngolo died the cowries contributed filled seven huts, representing several thousand francs. Besides, people give whatever they wish or can afford: a horse, a cow, a sheep, fowl, cowries, gold, strips of native cotton, fabrics, grain, etc.

764 574 Theoretically, all of this is supposed to be used to honor the dead, which is done in several ways. In the first place, it is obligatory to serve food and particularly drink to anyone who comes to present condolences. These meals and drinking bouts are a kind of communion since from everything consumed an offering is first made to the deceased and also [769] to the ancestors whom he has gone to join; it is a kind of communion with the departed members of the family.

These repasts and drinking bouts tend to develop into orgies, and the inexperienced or casual observer may think that they are carousals at the expense of the deceased. As a matter of fact, however, far from suffering a loss, the family of important persons receives more than it spends, at least for the time being (2). The more lavish the celebration, the more it is supposed to please the deceased and cause him to look favorably on his survivors.

2. The family will have to behave reciprocally toward the families who have thus shown their respect when deaths later occur among them.

764 735 In principle, everything not consumed is supposed to be given away as alms to the poor and not added to the family property. It is quite natural, therefore, that the poor of the village come to partake of the feast, and indeed, they are invited. They must be treated with much cordiality if the sentiment governing the feast conforms to the spirit of the custom. That is why the [171] chronicle tells of Nyana-n-koro, upon the death of Ngolo, claiming that the cowries given should be distributed to the poor, to travelers, and to all the needy; that is the true spirit of the custom, and that type of alms is particularly pleasing to the dead.

The funeral feasting continues for seven days, which are called dyansa, "alms." It is a time especially devoted to [537] condolences, called sanga-fo (1) "funerary discourse." The

1. Literally, "sayings (for the sake) of the dead."

764 period is sometimes reduced to three days, but a week conforms more to custom, as is shown by the Ségou chronicle cited earlier.

All this takes place "at the door of the dead," at the blon'-da, as the natives call it, that is, at the very place where the elder was wont to sit and where offerings were made to the ancestors. It is believed that the soul of the departed is there and will be gratified amidst this abundance honoring him and testifying to his kindness and also to his power. In the minds of the Bambara these repasts of communion form a very strong bond among those who partake of them. The act of eating consecrated food together is a kind of sacrament which binds the participants to mutual aid. A traitor is doomed to be cursed by the manes.

Magic, of course, can free a person from these bonds and even enable him to profit from these funeral gatherings to further the most nefarious schemes, but that does not alter the concepts on which the dyansa and the sanga-fo are based.

765 783 [824] (d) Mourning. The purification of the hut of the deceased takes place on the eighth day. Women pulverize tree bark -- from the cailcedra (2) especially -- put it in water,

2. Khaya senegalensis.

and sprinkle this liquid about the hut which they then sweep.

They assemble with native brooms, sing, and do a kind of dance step; they collect the dirt and throw it away at a crossroads outside the village (3). The hut may then be re-

3. Preferably at the main crossroads (da-n-kun'-ba-la).

occupied. [172]

765 514 During the eight days following the burial, the daughters of the fa live together in strict seclusion. They spend their days in the blon', where they spin cotton and take their meals. To take care of their natural needs, they go out only in a body;

765 twice a day, morning and evening, they go in procession, their
[514] heads covered with caps made of white cloth. They spend the nights together, in a single hut if possible.

The wives of the deceased go out only when it is ab-
[292] solutely necessary during the first moon after the death; they are dressed in white and wear a kind of white hood on their heads and sandals made of goatskin on their feet. At the end
[783] of the moon, at night and separately, they go to a sort of purification rite that takes place at the crossroads outside the village.

Up to the fortieth day there is a very gradual return to ordinary life. Then, and only then, the successor to the deceased is finally recognized and installed, as is shown in the chronicle of Ségou.

801 In closing, let us note how every ritual sequence rests
805 on periods of time whose real meaning must be sought in magic. The astral religion of the Semites in fact taught that on the third, seventh, and fortieth day after death the moon acts more powerful to destroy the body (1). Apparently some

1. See the meeting of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres of August 9, 1918, paper by Franz Cumont, "La commémoration des morts et l'astrologie [The Commemoration of the Dead and Astrology]," Journal Officiel (1918), p. 7224.

such beliefs must account for the Bambara rites planned precisely according to these numbers. This seems all the more likely since the Sudanese commonly believe that the fortieth day marks the separation of the flesh from the bones of buried corpses.

The Patriarchal Community

When the fa is dead, all his property remains jointly among his legal heirs, thus constituting a patriarchal community whose investigation has two parts: the community of persons and the community of property. [173]

I. The Community of Persons

Members of the community. The patriarchal community is made up solely of the legitimate descendants of the deceased fa: immediate descendants (sons and daughters), or his descendants exclusively in the male line (descendants of his sons and grandsons).

The descendants of the fa through his daughters are outside the community since they belong to the patriarchal communities of their respective fathers.

If, at his death, the fa leaves no male heirs, there can be no patriarchal community; his property is divided among his daughters or, if there are none, among his brothers. If only a father or mother or some other ascendant were left, his property would go to them, or if he leaves only daughters, his property goes to them, but in either case there will no longer be a community.

Legitimacy is the necessary and sufficient condition for inclusion as a member of the community. A legitimate child is one born of a marriage, that is, of a union between two free individuals that conforms to custom. When slavery introduced concubinage into the household, however, the rule was relaxed because a free man was unwilling to have his sons slaves. In practice, therefore, maternity resulting from intercourse with a free man frees his concubine from slavery, and the children of the union become members of the community. This dangerous privilege is often contested by agnate brothers born of free mothers.

Given the diversity of conjugal bonds, ranging from marriage to free union, it is easy to imagine the discussions that

848
596 arise on the subject of legitimacy. During the fa's lifetime,
614 his authority imposes whatever solution pleases him, but when
578 he is gone, the disputes involving status are all the more violent for having been suppressed or evaded for so long.

614 These disputes gain strength also from the difference in
596 rank which the members have within the community. The totality of prerogatives of all kinds which raise the fa above all others constitutes a kind of superior dignity whose essence is the omnipotence covered by the word faya, from which came the title fa [174] (master, lord). It is in reference to the faya that the members of the community are ranked.

[562] Only male members can advance claims to the faya, and because they can do this, they can all call themselves fa. On the other hand, women can never hold this authority; they are fantan'-u, "powerless."

596 Among the fa-u there are distinctions based on degree of
614 kinship and on age; those most closely related to the fa will be
601 the first to receive the honors about to be described. Male
561 descendants in the first degree form a sort of senate of which the eldest is a kind of president-by-birth; he is truly the fa, the actual representative of the deceased. The one immediately following him by rank in terms of age is his syere (follower), his heir presumptive at the head of the community. The other senators, usually brothers of the fa, are uncles (bina-u) to the descendants of the second degree and their children. By reason of the authority associated with the position of bina-u in the community, this kinship term has come to be a title of respect which is bestowed on men toward whom one wishes to show particular esteem (1). Because of their age,

1. It is worthy of note that in Uncle Tom's Cabin, Miss Stowe explains that among the slaves in America the word "uncle" had precisely this meaning as a title of respect and honor.

all the senators of the community are commonly called koro-u, "the elders," and the fa is first among them.

561 596 614 Among the rest of the men in the community, one distinguishes those who, being circumcised, are married and even fathers of families or who are about to become one or the other; these men are called kamalen'-u, literally, "the young masters." Finally there are the uncircumcised: first, the adolescent boys called soli-ma-u, "people of the soli," that is to say, who will soon be circumcised; the others are small boys (den-tye-u).

596 614 The fa, his election and installation. The personage in the community on whom all attention is concentrated is the fa.

Even if during the life of the fa his successor is known, it does not always happen that the replacement will follow as was intended. [175]

In the first place, the designated heir is free to refuse the faya for any reason he pleases, including solely that of personal convenience. The chronicle of Ségou relates that Biton's son, who lived at Oltala, refused the faya because of the excesses of the "people of Ségou."

More often, however, the faya eludes claimants for two main reasons.

No one can become fa if he does not belong to the community. Hence, anyone who ceases to be a member of the community, whether voluntarily or not, cannot attain the faya. One may cease to belong to the community either in fact or by law. The former condition would include prolonged absence, enslavement, settling abroad without hope of return, etc. This brings about a kind of suspension of the exercise of rights, but not their abrogation. On the other hand, when the member expressly renounces the community or when he is excluded by the decision of the fa (1) and the senate, he is

1. So it was that Ma-n-son decreed that his brothers Séri and Ba were excluded from the faya, because they merely looked on as spectators when he was struggling with Nyana-n-koro and had thus shown themselves hostile to the fa.

596 deprived of his rights, he and subsequently those who would
614 represent him; the branch of the family of which he is head is henceforth dead so far as the family is concerned.

In the second place, no member of the community
[848] attains the faya unless he fulfills certain conditions, of which the first are legitimacy and primogeniture.

The fact that the claimant is a member of the com-
[578] munity implies that he is legitimate. Since it does happen, however, that the question may not have actually been investigated or, by the wish of the fa, not even been raised, the legal heirs who would be injured and intriguers who seek any pretext -- and there are always some of these persons -- raise the question, and infinite complications often follow.

Primogeniture is equally subject to challenge, and the opposition everywhere finds it a convenient motive for their
[595] machinations. It is, indeed, understandable that in polygamous households, with the wives sometimes residing in various places apart from the husband, simultaneous or at least close births give rise to disagreements as to which son was in fact the first-born.

Finally, even though he may actually be the eldest legitimate son, the claimant may find himself passed over because of measures taken [176] against him by the late fa. It appears that although custom favors the eldest legitimate son, it yields to the expressed wishes of the fa if the senate agrees to his rejecting the candidate. This is a grave step and one which may lead to the most violent reactions.

This raises the question of whether special talents or aptitudes should be required of the claimant, over and above those of legitimacy and primogeniture. For example, can he be required to be healthy, active, and a good administrator? It appears that the senate may choose to eliminate a person it deems unworthy. This applies particularly to a free man who has voluntarily fallen from that state by living like a caste member or a slave. By this behavior he has already excluded himself from the community, but it sometimes happens that his actual exclusion has not been noted or announced before the question of accession to the faya arises.

596 614 Most often, however, the debates are concerned either with legitimacy or with primogeniture, and it is by no means rare for a fa, before his death, to insist that the one chosen be the one designated by custom and to threaten to call down curses on anyone who should try to bypass him or to reject his authority (1).

1. Ngolo and Ma-n-son both acted in this manner, according to the chronicle of Ségou.

In associations which have adopted a community organization analogous to that of the family, the election of a head is determined solely by these factors. It may be concluded that these are the bases consecrated by custom and that any other arrangements can only result in the worst kind of disagreement.

567 578 596 614 There is confirmation for this. Where slaves are numerous and well organized, they may refuse to recognize the new fa and choose another from among the members of the community. They may even decide to give themselves to a foreign master on the pretext that the fa imposed upon them by custom does not meet with their approval. This is a disaster which jeopardizes the wealth, strength, and even the unity of a family, for it can happen, in order to deal with the crisis, that a compromise is made which more or less ignores the regularly designated fa. This results in wrangling which usually ends with a schism in the community.

The history of these countries tells of many such cases, [177] because the slaves, upon becoming powerful, made the law in the families. The chronicle of Ségou thus relates that the slaves belonging to Dina Wara gave themselves to Biton upon the death of the former. It goes without saying that endless intrigues always precede such defections. The really successful fa, such as Biton, earned their reputations as able politicians and increased their fortunes precisely by their ability to avoid such disasters in their own communities, while stirring them up elsewhere.

[662]

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614 In principle, even a duly recognized fa is not installed until 40 days after the death of his predecessor. When there is no dispute, he in fact functions as fa at once; when, on the other hand, there is disagreement, the period may be extended.

The 40 days do not create an hiatus between the two administrations. When the new fa is installed, however long a time may have passed since the death of the predecessor, his faya is considered to date from the day of the latter's death. That is why the temporary official makes an inventory accounting for everything, if possible in the presence of the new fa, so that there will be no question when he turns over the inheritance.

Thus, this delay imposed by beliefs (ascribable, apparently, to magic) governed by respect for the mysterious workings of nature, has given rise to a kind of suspension of civil affairs, which allows the community to accept only a chief whom it recognizes because he fulfills the conditions required by custom.

Once he is recognized and installed, the fa continues in office no matter what befalls him; he cannot be removed for any reason whatsoever. When he is physically and morally unable to act, however, he is replaced by his eventual successor. So it was that when Sounsan was very old, he relinquished the faya to Massa who, in turn, did the same thing with respect to Béni-Fali.

It may even come about that the chosen fa is absent for an indefinite period. This happened, as we have seen, in the case of Dessé-koro, who was a prisoner at Ségou. He was not superceded, but in order to avoid the difficulties of an indefinite interregnum, Sira Bo was asked to take over the faya. He agreed only on condition that he would not be dispossessed if Dessé-koro should return. Mo-Siré, "little brother" (duani), i.e., uterine younger brother of Dessé, [178] promised in Dessé's name that Sira Bo would remain fa as long as he lived. When Dessé returned, he respected the promise made in his name by his duani. This is a typical example of the manner in which compromises can be made with custom.

596 614 The functions of the "fa." The duties of the fa are many and complex; for the sake of clarity, we shall study them under three headings: cult; relations between communities; administration of property (which will be studied in connection with community property).

596 614 782 Cult. Religion gives considerable strength to the family since nothing is decided without consulting the manes and the gods. Raffenel has given us a picture of old Niany praying to his manes on behalf of his absent son: "O my God, I command my son to your case since he has gone away on a mission important to all of us. Be with him on his journey. Preserve him from the wicked and from all misfortune so that he may once again enter by this door through which he departed and before which I am now kneeling. I implore you, O my God, to restore him to my love and to that of his mother, his brothers and his sisters (1)."

[114]

1. In spite of deviations due to Raffenel's desire to give a personal and literary touch to what he reports, the essential points of this prayer are accurate, and that is why I quote it.

[187] The chronicle of Kaarta tells us that old Soumson begged for early death as a sign that his lineage would be powerful in the future. Also, in order to make a prophecy come true, Deniba Be submitted to the fatal blows of the Khassonké to make sure that his people would conquer the country.

After all, no one is free of fear of the gods, not even those whom one would take for brave spirits. Raffenal tells us that Bouo, his informant, feared the wrath of the god whose secrets he had revealed. The chronicle of Ségou tells that Ngolo, thinking he had aroused the wrath of his manes by encouraging evil desires in his eldest son, Ntyi, did not hesitate to sacrifice his [179] own grandson, the son of the aforesaid Ntyi, an atrocity which bears witness to a faith that was as profound as it was barbarous.

596 614 787 It is the duty of the fa to see to the cult. He projects everything that happens to him personally to the supernatural plane so as to come to conclusions that will guide his own conduct. He discerns in the most ordinary dreams indications of what will please the dead. Furthermore, the people around him point out the signs of divine will that they have observed. If, as happens in great houses, the fa is obliged to turn over part of his responsibility to the family gods to one of his confidantes, the latter will not fail to keep him informed of anything significant that may be revealed.

[576] Thus, daily life is unceasingly dominated by the supernatural, and every important event is conditioned by these beliefs. This is readily seen in all the family institutions: birth, circumcision, marriage, and death.

[577] It follows that the moral behavior of the family is a concern of the fa. Whenever something abnormal or painful occurs, the fa looks into it. Do the dead perhaps have reason to be dissatisfied? Have they been neglected or offended? He questions them, and if he finds confirmation for his suspicions, he at once seeks to appease the manes in whatever way they desire. If the trouble persists, he investigates further, and sometimes everyone in the house is questioned or, if one prefers, made to confess, even infants. Could one of them, moved by ill feeling, have uttered maledictions when invoking the dead?

614 596 783 [578] When the fa himself is ill, this general confession is virtually obligatory. This is because the absolute authority of a fa can hardly fail to arouse hatred, and hatred, a bad counselor, makes people resort to magic to rob the more powerful of life. Fear that the elder's "clairvoyance" will discover the wickedness in the depths of one's soul and punish it usually induces the guilty person to obtain a pardon for his wrongdoing by confessing it, and then everything returns to normal.

596 614 [763] Upon the death of the fa, it is the first duty of his successor to try to discover, by any means, the causes of death and to avenge it if need be.

Everything which the old fa was wont to honor, which forms the spiritual treasure [180] of the family, must also be

596 614 honored by the new fa, and there is nothing to prevent him from adding to the treasure.

769 The basic cult of the family is the cult of the ancestors. Although the dead are frequently buried outside the family residence, their souls are thought to live in the blon' of the dwelling. The blon' is a hut with two openings on opposite sides, one [343 592] to the street and the other to the interior, usually the courtyard. It is impossible to enter or leave a house without going through the blon', where there is always a guard, at least in important houses. The ancestors are usually represented in the 778 blon' by a group of crude, conical clay figures of a man and 769 woman, the latter identifiable by the exaggerated breasts. Sometimes the symbol of the dead is a small board about a meter long, twenty centimeters wide, and a little more than a centimeter thick; at one of its extremities a slight protuberance vaguely suggests a head, a kind of ellipsoidal cylinder with eyes, nose, mouth, and chin faintly carved on one side. On the side with the face, the board has a checkerboard pattern, often of alternating black and red squares, probably to indicate the material of a loincloth. The lower extremity of the figure has a semicircular portion cut away to give the effect of legs spread apart when the effigy is set up.

769 782 778 Whatever form it may have, the representation of the dead is called kara (1) and serves in some manner as an altar

1. In Soninké, kara means "to die" and "death."

on which libations are poured and to which are attached the remains of the sacrifices made to the dead (su-u). Nevertheless, it is also a very widespread practice to make libations and sacrifices before the door of the blon' and, more rarely, before the door of an inner hut. In this case the liquid is poured and [775] the remains smeared on the vertical edge of the opening. This practice is based on the belief that the souls of the dead ancestors like to return to the place where the fa liked to sit during his lifetime. Undoubtedly, the ancestors are regarded as guardians of the threshold; they are [181] honored as such because it is believed that they prefer to be honored in this way.

769 This is the place where on important occasions the fa
778 receives congratulations or condolences, which are addressed
782 not only to him but also to the ancestors who, though invisible, are nevertheless present.

When the fa wishes to make an offering to the ances-
769 tors (fa su son'), he squats before the door of the blon' with his
782 head bare and a chicken in his hand. He addresses the most recently deceased (1), saying: "I offer this chicken in my own

1. It seems that the ancestors form a kind of chain in which the first invisible link is the ancestor most recently deceased and the first visible link is the current fa.

name and in that of my children. Jointly with our dead fathers and mothers, preserve us from sorcerers who eat souls (suba) and from the evil of the wicked; protect us from sickness and disaster; guard our health; give us good wives and healthy children; bring success to our work in the fields, and give us rain."

If the offering is being made for a particular purpose, the fa is explicit about it and speaks just as he would to a living person. He concludes by asking that the victim reveal the response by the way it falls as it dies. Then he cuts the chicken's throat and dribbles the blood on the wall at either side of the door of the blon'. He than resumes his crouched position, and after throwing the fowl a short distance, he watches its convul-
787 sions and waits for it to fall motionless. Usually the position is regarded as favorable if the animal dies with its legs in the air and its feet turned toward the officiator; if the feet are turned away, the response is unfavorable. Often, just as he completes the offering, the fa announces what position he considers favorable or unfavorable.

The fa gives the sacrificed chicken to his wife to be cooked, and then he divides it among the members of the family; this is truly a communion.

769 As a substitute for the chicken, it is very common to
782 offer some dege, a bit of millet coarsely ground and thrown in a little water. The fa keeps this liquid in a small gourd. It is perhaps [182] reasonable to think that this is the most ancient manner of honoring the dead and, in particular, calling for their protection in obtaining the two essentials of life: grain and water.

[273] An equally common libation is made with dlo, a kind of millet beer which every Bambara enjoys drinking to the point of intoxication. The dead could hardly fail to be pleased with an offering of what they had enjoyed so much on earth!

[276] One must conclude, too, that offerings of kola nuts please the dead because it gives them a chance to enjoy a favorite treat. The officiator chews the kola nut and then spits out his saliva mixed with the juice and remains along the walls of the bion',

Such are the ordinary offerings, but on special occasions the quantity and importance of the gifts are increased according to the desired results. When many people are present and the [781] house is prosperous, the victims are oxen and sheep. It should not be forgotten that the flesh of these consecrated victims, eaten in common, makes a very strong mystical bond between the participants; it is a true communion. It is generally conceded that the bond created by drinking consecrated liquids together is much less strong.

776 In addition to his ancestors, every Bambara has as his
778 special protector, one of those gods (nyana) which are created wholly by the work of the magician. Every family has one or more nyana, whose priest is the fa. The boli, the symbol and altar of this type of divinity, is usually hidden from the uninitiated; it is put into a leather or canvas sack, a gourd, or a pot. The nyana of Soumaa, the ancestor of the Massa-si, was a n-ko whose boli was kept in a monkey skin. The boli is taken out of its cover so that libations can be poured over it and animal remains smeared on it. If there is some objection to exposing it, the offering is put on the cover.

769 Everything that takes place relative to the cult of the
794 nyana is analogous to that described for the cult of the ancestors.

769 It has the same base: request, offering, communion. In ad-
794 dition, there is a liturgy appropriate to each nyana, in particular, the mysterious sayings that attract the god and make him [183] the actual servitor of the person uttering these sayings, rather than a benevolent protector. This shows the antithesis as to final ends between religion and magic, as was set forth in Chapter 2 of the present work.

596 The fa also has the responsibility of maintaining the
614 efficacy of magic weapons; he must fulfill all the obligations
778 required by each of them. Among them there are true nyana, sometimes independent, sometimes a part of the great nyana. Mostly they are amulets or talismans whose virtue depends on certain rites or simply on the observance of certain interdicts.

596 Finally, the fa is the guardian of custom and family
614 relics, which likewise have a religious basis since custom,
778 after all, is the continuing will of the generations, the imperious mandate of the ancestors, the table of law of the manes. Any transgression of custom is certain to bring the worst disasters. The relics are ordinary or ceremonial objects left by the successive fa. Some of them are so strongly associated with the patriarchal office that on special occasions or in certain circumstances the fa is forced by custom to wear these objects impregnated with the virtue of the ancestors. The cap and weapons of Biton at Ségou were of this nature, and such is the case among the Massa-si.

596 Relations between members of the community. Theo-
614 retically, the powers of the fa over the members of the community are absolute. He can hire them out, offer them as security, sell them, and even put them to death (1). He also

1. Note how Ma-n-son got rid of some of his brothers.

has the right to use whatever belongs to them,(2) both persons

2. Ngolo sacrificed his son's son.

596 and property. On the other hand, he also has duties toward
614 them, for it is the essence of the institution to support its members.

561 All the acts of the fa, even the arbitrary ones, are,
578 according to law, under the control of the senate. It should
596 not be forgotten that the members of the community are di-
614 vided into two hostile groups: that of the "elders," which includes the fa, and that of the "young masters." The fa could hardly [184] keep the common property all to himself, so he shares it more or less as he pleases, and naturally, the elders are among the most generously treated. The young men seldom get any such favors, hence their resentment against the elders, due largely to envy of their favored position.

596 It is customary for a fa when he becomes the head of a
614 patriarchy to leave the management of his own community to his eldest son (1). This separation of interests is essential in

[554 492]

1. The eldest son, or better, the first-born son, thus occupies a privileged position, and in Kaarta he is usually provided with a white horse to make him conspicuous. See p. 122 about the death of 98 first-born sons mounted on white horses.

order to prevent the fa from despoiling the patriarchy to benefit his own community. The history of these countries shows how often this rule is broken by ambitious men who hope to profit by the general confusion to build up a considerable fortune. Among both the elders and the young men they find willing accomplices, and as their power increases, they extend their extortions. There are many signs, however, of the fragility of their despotism, which they themselves recognize. They usually, therefore, take pains to settle the question of succession in advance hoping to avoid the collapse of their achievements. Wasted effort! Custom, which they have ignored, regains its rights when they die and often does so during their lifetime. This is a logical explanation of the fact that

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614 most of the great empires have survived their founders for only a short time.

More often than not, a "young master" has a position in the community which is considerably less pleasant than that of a domestic slave who lives alongside him and ostensibly under his command. A domestic slave can escape or stir up all sorts of difficulties that result in the diminution of the patrimony. There is no such thing to be feared from a member of the community; should he be punished, banished, or leave, the common property does not suffer. If he goes away and is successful, he will not fail to share his good fortune with the community. Indeed, anyone who loses interest in the welfare of his community runs the risk of being cut off from it. He must actually live with the community; if not, he is treated as a dead member. [185] He must be present for anything that transpires. The chronicle of Ségou gives an example. Quarrels broke out among Ngolo's sons when he died. Nyana-n-koro, who had been favored by his father, thought that this affection designated him as the successor to the deceased. Ngolo, however, had expressly chosen Ma-n-son in conformity with custom. Nevertheless, confident of winning, Nyana-n-koro tried to oust Ma-n-son by force, but in vain. In the course of these fratricidal struggles, certain members of the community remained neutral, hoping in this way to retain the good will of the victor. They gained nothing, however, because Ma-n-son was the winner and turned against them. He sentenced his brothers Séri and Ba to a sort of exile from the community, giving each of them a token share of the estate and ordering them not to increase it.

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614 Since property is held in common, the fa is obliged to give some benefits to all the members of the community. This is why, when necessary, he provides the marriage payment that enables a young man to found a family; he ransoms persons who have been enslaved; he provides for the sick when their expenses are high; he pays civil, judicial, or other debts when the debtor is forced to pay and the community is responsible. These payments, however, which are made with the approval of the senate, are regarded as loans to the recipient with his consent, he is henceforth in debt to the community. He will not only have to repay

421 596 614 the loan but something in addition, and he will always show his gratitude for it. If the repayment drags on and on, as usually happens, the community does not withdraw his right to the debt, which is never lost; it watches for a turn for the better in the debtor's affairs, meddles in his business, and plagues his widows and children for all it can get from them after his death. The rapacity of the community uses the old debt as an excuse for seizing everything left by the debtor.

466 596 614 Every member of the community, strictly speaking, is at the service of the community and must therefore cooperate to assure its prosperity. If he cannot work himself, or does not wish to, in the fields, for instance, he must provide a substitute in the person of one of his children or his own slaves. To the extent that he cannot find the means to exempt himself, [186] he is treated as one of the "poor" and is forced to work.

166 It is easy to understand that the young men often leave to make their fortunes elsewhere in order to escape a power that is so suspicious, troublesome and all-pervading. Some of them never return, either because they have managed to create an independent life for themselves, or because they are more comfortable at a safe distance from their authoritarian elders. More often, however, the young man, having founded an independent family far away, keeps in close touch with his community and watches developments there in case he may one day be able to profit from them.

578 561 885 The young men who stay at home form a party of intrigue which is forever at war with the fa and the senate. Their opposition weakens, however, as they approach the age at which they too will participate in the faya to which they aspire. Gradually, as one changes from kamalen' to bina, he acquires the same niggling authoritarianism which then arouses the animosity of the new kamalen'-u.

562 583 In concluding this study of the members of the community, the situation of girls remains to be discussed. Like the boys, they belong completely to the community, which, as a result, has the right to make as much profit out of them as possible. So, since exogamy is the rule, the community cedes the girl in usufruct to whoever pays the bride price, and because she will

562 583 inevitably leave the community, she can never claim any authority. Thus condemned to perpetual powerlessness, a woman never has the right to any position other than an inferior one in native society. Motives based on interest or affection may modify her situation more or less to her advantage, but they will not change her basic rights, which are at the root of all disputes about women, between spouses or between communities.

II. The Community of Property

421 What is the property of which the patrimony is composed?

It is impossible to provide a detailed list, which would, in any case, he endless. Nor should we limit ourselves to the definitions of our legal system, which are too narrow. From the native point of view, patrimonial property [187] may be divided into three principal categories.

[776] First, there are the gods; the manes, or souls of the ancestral protectors of the family; and the nyana, the gods created by the magician. Some of them protect only the community, while others are also concerned with other collectivities. Finally, there are the innumerable magic weapons, which are gods of a sort. In the discussion of the duties of the fa, I spoke of these gods, and they are also mentioned in other parts of this work.

421 424 A second category of property is made up of the reciprocal rights of the community and its members, on the one hand, and of the community and similar collectivities, on the other. I have just explained the first, and the second will be dealt with later in the chapter under the heading "Relations between Communities."

421 422 423 Finally, all the things that are particularly valued make up the third category: gold; cattle and sheep; grain; agricultural, industrial, and commercial products of all kinds; dwellings; etc. Three points related to this last category require special consideration: agrarian usufruct, conjugal usufruct, and slaves.

421 Finally, the status of a community is, as it were, syn-
424 thesized and symbolized by the "honorable name" (dyamu), by
596 which this collectivity titles itself and which it considers one of
614 its most precious possessions.

Agrarian usufruct. Ownership of land does not exist.
423 Each family has a right of use, uncertain in principle but permanent in fact, over the lands assigned to it in the domain of the genie-protector (nyana dugu-da-siri).

It may happen that a single family is the sole beneficiary of a given domain because it is the only one linked to the genie protecting the place.

More generally, various families are under the protection of the same local genie, whose domain in that case includes the parts exploited in common as well as the fields expressly assigned to individual families under its protection. The agrarian usufruct which is included as part of the community property exists with respect to these individual fields.

This usufruct differs from that recognized by our law. It is the dugu-tigi and his council who allot the common lands, and the process always involves wrangling and [187] deals. In principle, the plot assigned remains indefinitely with the family benefited if it is continuously farmed and an annual fee is paid. Following the land for several years is permitted. The family exploiting the land may use it in any way, and its right is as complete as possible, short only of alienating it. The family may lease, cede, or pawn its usufruct. If a transaction involves a foreigner, however, it may not be concluded without the consent of the dugu-tigi, who consults his council. In general, any action which might conceivably injure the welfare of the community as a whole must be submitted to the dugu-tigi for approval before being undertaken.

The usufruct comes to an end under the following circumstances: when a family permanently leaves the community governing the fields; when the dugu-tigi and his council decide to dispose of the land for reasons which they are not required to give; when a family gives the land up voluntarily or has been deprived of it because it has been used in a manner contrary to the interests of the agrarian community.

476 461 567 The patriarchal community draws its subsistence from this agricultural exploitation, and as a result, a kind of work organization has developed. Patriarchal communities or important families have agricultural land in various regions and these tracts are often far apart. Some members of the community or a group of slaves are therefore settled in each domain, sometimes on a permanent basis, sometimes for the period of clearing and cultivating the soil, sometimes for the period of harvest. [361]

Theoretically, every member of the community and every slave must work for the community from dawn to around noon every day during the farming season. Two days, however, Monday and Thursday, are given to these persons for work in their own fields. Anyone who cannot or will not work has the right to provide a replacement from among his dependents.

There are, of course, many exceptions to these rules. In the first place, everyone works according to his position. Among the poor, the master works as hard as the slave, if not harder; among people in comfortable circumstances, the master merely controls and directs the work, sometimes reserving a particular job for himself. In important communities, field work [189] is almost exclusively the duty of the slaves, under the surveillance of their leaders and following the orders of the fa, who either supervises it himself or has a member of his entourage do so.

583 589 768 Conjugal usufruct. When she marries, a woman is given in usufruct in exchange for the bride price. This usufruct is community property exactly like the things used for the bride price.

When a fa dies, the disposal of the conjugal usufruct included in the estate is a serious matter. Since the conjugal usufruct is of the same duration as the life of the woman, the death of the husband has no legal effect on the situation of his spouse. Since it is understood, however, that the widow has no sexual obligations to her husband's heirs, the usufruct is reduced in that respect. Such is the lot of widows when the heirs decide to keep them without marrying them and the women elect to remain.

583 Most often, however, the heirs either marry the widows
589 or send them home, or the women leave of their own volition.
768 An heir who marries a widow of the deceased must take
[587] her back to her family, obtain their consent, and pay them a new bride price, required because a new usufruct is involved. The chronicle of Ségou shows us how this custom operates. Upon the death of Dina Wara, his son escorted to Ségou his father's widow, Biton's sister, whom he wanted to marry. He made sumptuous gifts in order to obtain consent.

In the case of a widow who is sent home or who leaves of her own accord, responsibility for the bride price already paid rests with the party who broke the contract, i.e., with the person who sent the widow away or, if she left of her own accord, with her family. The question of responsibility for the bride price is an important one, since usually neither party has either the means or the desire to make it up. As a result, every effort is made to evade payment, and it is common practice to resort to the most shameless bargaining of the woman involved. A husband is sought who will agree to pay the bride price asked by the one having rights over her, but most often, partial payment will be made when the woman is returned, the creditor's impatience is calmed by gifts, and the balance of the bride price remains wholly or partly unpaid [190] at the time of the debtor's death. This obviously results in insolvable complications during and after the marriage (1).

1. Concerning the lot of widows, see the discussions about the widows of Biton and Ngolo in the chronicle of Ségou.

567 Slaves. Enslavement comes about in many ways, but the
727 three principal ones are force, birth, and the result of obligations.

Force has perhaps been the primary cause of enslavement. A person who surrenders is the chattel of the conqueror, but the treatment given him varies in accordance with his previous situation. Was he a man of position? If he is violent, he is killed or sold; if it is thought that his relatives will pay a high ransom, he is kept. If he is clever enough to arouse sympathy, he often is

567 well treated; if his captivity continues for a long time, he may
727 even found a family and live like a free man on parole, required only to remain where he is. Time takes care of many things. Under the same circumstances, a woman of quality usually becomes the wife of the conqueror.

People belonging to a caste escape slavery by entering the service of the conqueror to perform their customary trades.

It is only humble people -- the majority -- whose lot is often terrible; dragged far away, sold and resold, they often fall into the hands of bad masters.

567 Theoretically, a female slave's children are always slaves. A child born in slavery belongs to the mother's master and shares her fate. If she is the master's concubine, the child is born free and thereby frees the mother.

A contract slave is not always master of his own fate. Since the fa has absolute authority over his people, it is he who makes the contract which binds them.

[681] A free individual may fall into slavery as a result of his crimes or misdemeanors (2); it is in this way that an incorrigible

2. Nzan Fato became a slave for stealing a beehive (p. 49 above).

thief becomes the slave of the chief to whom he is sent for punishment.

Many poor people, attracted by the favored lot of the [191] wolo-so in large communities, go into voluntary slavery in hope of a comparable position. All the Sudanese empires had these voluntary slaves, who came in great numbers from all directions.

Where there are many slaves, they form what is called dyon'-kuru or dyon'-futu, depending on the place, that is, "an assembly of slaves," and their leader, who represents them with the master, is an important personage by virtue of their strength. When the community to which these slaves belong is an ancient one, they are divided into groups, each of which is named for the fa under whose authority it was organized. In theory, the leader of each group is its oldest member, and the leader of the

567 slaves (1). The master often keeps this paramount head near

1. This appears to be the application of a kind of right of seniority, analogous to that of primogeniture.

him as his confidential agent; otherwise, he buys a slave or selects a free man for this high post and thus better controls the situation. In such a case, the paramount leader recognized by the slaves is merely the spokesman for his congeners in their dealings with the master.

[304] Among the Kouloubali the wolo-so have a characteristic tattoo formed by three broad incisions from temple to lower jaw on both sides of the face. Far from feeling humiliated by this mark, every wolo-so is as proud of it as though it were a sign of noble origin. Many free men have adopted this tattoo in order to pose as members of the great Bambara family.

The status of a slave is not immutable, but generally includes three stages described by the following names: san'dyon', "a slave acquired through trade"; dyon'wolo-so, "slave born in the house"; and dyongoro, "freed."

A newly purchased slave is put under observation. If he appears to be intractable or vicious or is afflicted with a serious disease (epilepsy, Leprosy, sleeping sickness, nyctalopia), one gets rid of him as soon as possible.

If he proves to be docile, devoted, industrious, and a good worker, he is kept. He is given a job in the house or is [192] placed with an old servant to be trained or with an artisan to be taught a trade.

A female slave in the same circumstances who becomes a mother at once finds her situation improved (1). Her child is

1. The father's identity is of no importance, since the children all belong by law to her master.

wolo-so, "born in the house," and she acquires the same

567 status (2). The wolo-so is not usually sold or, more accurately,

2. It should be noted that there is an analogy here with the case of a concubine who becomes a mother; because her child by a free father is free, she becomes free ipso facto.

he will be disposed of only in the most desperate circumstances. The master's wealth and prosperity are dependent on the wolo-so.

Indeed, the wolo-so is a kind of member of the community; nothing happens in the community without his knowing it and participating in accordance with his position. It is true that he is required to work for the community, but no more nor less than any of the "poor people," and he often succeeds in establishing for himself a position that is considerably better than that of a child of the house. He and all of his dependents belong to the master, but barring the most serious circumstances, the master will not take anything away from him. On the contrary, the master furnishes him an enviable lot: he provides for his marriage and sets him up; he entrusts him with the management of property, often very valuable; and he treats him with a degree of affection not always displayed toward his own family because jealousy brings tensions and hatred between members of the community. Thus, the wolo-so often profits by his status rather than suffers from it.

Like the members of the community, he may exempt himself from the labor of the community by sending one of his children as a substitute and paying an annual fee in addition to certain services (3). If he is really prosperous -- and this is

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3. In general, the fee consists of a certain number of measures (mould) of millet, approximately enough to feed an adult for a year. The services consist of work on the upkeep of buildings, repairs on the roofs and walls of the huts.

567 unlikely -- he may even own slaves himself and use them as substitutes.

Thus the relations between master and slave gradually become very different from what our European minds imagine. A master is bound to his wolo-so [193] by a thousand ties: he admits them to the cult; he marries their daughters; he circumcises their sons along with his own; and he allies himself with some of them by fraternization or an oath.

Even if he does not have such close contact, the wolo-so who is freed from labor, who perhaps lives at some distance or, if nearby, in virtual independence, is henceforth a dyongoro, that is, "freed." The link is not severed, and the freed man is a kind of relative. He is interested in everything that happens in his master's community and is present upon all important occasions, never coming with empty hands. Reciprocally, he is never treated like a stranger by the master. The master contributes to every event concerning him: he helps him get his sons married and established; on the occasion of the soli, he assembles his children along with his own, which gives them a degree of common solidarity.

The admission of the wolo-so to his master's community is shown publicly by the fact that the wolo-so bears the dyamu of his master.

It would be an exaggeration to claim that the house slave's situation is always so fortunate; it depends on many different factors (1).

> 1. A slave is seldom permitted to buy his freedom; the slave himself does not seek this redemption which would free only him and leave his family and most of his property in the hands of the master.

551 The dyamu. This is the name given to himself by the native, bestowed upon him by others, or inherited from his ancestors, but in any case one that has become such an honor that merely to pronounce it is enough to bring forth a show of homage toward one who bears it, for example, Kouloubali, Dyara, Dembélé, etc.
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This is because the dyamu in itself sums up the history of the community that bears it; it implies everything involving the ancestors, as well as the achievements of present members, their ignominies, and even their fraternal, conjugal, political, and supernatural alliances.

One might imagine that one or another of the characteristic aspects covered by the dyamu would serve to identify the bearers of the same name, but the Europeans who study the native milieu have long been accustomed to identifying those who bear the same dyamu by means of [194] their respective tne (interdicts), and the natives do the same (1).

1. When this was first being done, there was an error of interpretation and hasty generalization which falsified the results. The tne which accompanies the dyamu was made analogous with totem, and it was stated that the dyamu and the name of the tne object were one and the same. Careful study has established that there is nothing to the alleged correspondence.

For the Black, any of his fellows who bears the same dyamu as his and shares with him one or more tne is regarded as a relative, even though he may belong to a different people.

Among individuals of different peoples, certain dyamu, although dissimilar, are regarded as equivalent and are interchanged, because those who bear them have common tne (interdicts).

As a result of one of the alliances that will be described later under "Relations between Communities," the tne of one party henceforth become the tne of the other, and vice versa, and this leads to the equivalence of dyamu. Marriage sometimes has the same effect when the union is an important one, greatly desired, or even more, is the sort of marriage that forms indissoluble bonds and an unshakable solidarity between families.

3. The Family Community or the Family

Conjugal Union (furu)

581 One of the most essential elements of the community based on descent is legitimacy, and one of its sources is in the lawful conjugal union which we call marriage. There are other kinds of conjugal union, but none has such definite effects.

Custom as it concerns marriage has its fullest expression at the time of the first marriage, when the spouses are brought under community control. We shall study all the details of custom in such a case, which will facilitate relating it to the various other situations. [195]

I. Marriage

First Marriage

Marriage is the union of two free individuals of the opposite sex for the purpose of founding a family. Certain conditions and formalities are required prior to the union of the spouses.

582 Conditions. Since there is no native institution that enables a Black to know for certain how old he is, there is no definite age requirement, as there is in our legislation. On the other hand, since marriage involves sexual union, capability for this union is theoretically required of the future spouses. Nevertheless, although a male is considered marriageable only if he has reached puberty and is circumcised, a female is often married even before her first menses. Furthermore, there is nothing to prevent the marriage of an old man, however old and decrepit he may be (1).

1. Although we are giving facts here that are not always relevant to the first marriage, we do so in order to avoid having to return to them later on when they will be out of their natural context.

582 It is not unusual for an old man to marry a very young girl; indeed, it is common. Although a young man rarely marries a very old woman, a woman may marry a man much younger than she is as a result of the customs involved with inheritance.

Kinship in the direct line is an obstacle, in infinitum. Certain collateral relatives may not marry each other: uncle and niece, aunt and nephew. Marriage is also an obstacle in some cases: a man may not be the husband of two sisters simul- 587 taneously, although he may marry them successively; the same restriction applies to a mother and daughter and an aunt and niece.

A man may not marry the wife of his son, nephew, or younger brother.

No marriage can take place between free persons in good standing and people of caste or, still less, slaves.

584 Impediments. From the opening of negotiations to the moment when the woman is handed over, there is a very long interval [196] of time during which impediments may arise.

First marriages, with which we are here concerned, are community affairs. A young man who would undertake the matter on his own would be most imprudent for he is no more his own master than is the girl, and their wishes are not of the least importance; this is an occasion for the fa to bring off a profitable deal. The fa, therefore, opposes any match which does not suit his plans and, indeed, forces the young man to share his views. If the latter rebels, the refusal of the fa to recognize the marriage will deprive the wife and children of any claim to legitimacy in the eyes of the community which he heads. There is no legal recourse possible against such a decision, because each community is answerable only to itself for matters concerning it.

The girl is even more completely under the control of [562] the community than the young man. Destined to be given in usufruct, she is entirely at the mercy of those holding this right over her. If she rebels, she runs the risk of being brutally brought to task through every means of coercion and, if in such circum- [85] stances she has children, they can be taken from her by the community, to which they will then belong. Custom gives her no rights over them whatsoever.

584 Thus, the fa of the two communities manage the entire transaction. Does this mean that the young people have no way of influencing the decision of the "elders"? No, because here, as elsewhere, all sorts of intrigue affect the decision of the fa. He must take account of the views of those around him; he is aware of their feelings, and he is just as likely to subordinate his interests to affection as to hatred. He is perfectly well aware, as is his entourage, that although he can impose his will, even though arbitrary, while he lives, all he has achieved may collapse at his death if his work was ill supported.

In short, the rigidity of the principles which put the "young" at the mercy of the "elders" is, in fact, more often [182] than not relaxed in favor of the young people's desires. The solidarity between members of the community makes them give heed to the opinions of others; it is this need to minimize differences of opinion that makes any family affair drag on endlessly. Discussions, agreements, and reciprocal gifts characterize the [197] bargaining and compromise which are so great a part of the transactions. From this it is apparent what an essential role is played by the numerous intermediaries who are called in to prevent clashes and to mitigate friction, but too often turn to exploiting community difficulties.

In any event, these discussions serve to publicize these transactions just as we achieve the same end through legal means.

The request and agreements. The request is made by an [564] intermediary. In Kaarta this is a man of caste, usually a dyeli (griot), accompanied by a free man. Elsewhere, notably at Ségou, he is sometimes a middle-aged man, known for his experience in such matters, who in this role is called furu-bolo-ma-tigi, "marriage director."

The furu-bolo-ma-tigi goes to the house of the fa of the girl, states his mission, and if he is favorably received, offers him some kola nuts which he has brought with him. He returns home with a promise that the request will be considered.

The fa does in fact consult his entourage and especially his ancestors and gods. The furu-bolo-ma-tigi returns with offerings to be used in questioning the ancestors and gods; if the reply

584 is unfavorable, that is by no means the end of the matter, for both ancestors and gods usually allow themselves to be persuaded, for a price. When the reply is, or becomes, favorable, the furu-bolo-ma-tigi gives customary presents to the fa and to the girl's family. Henceforth, the two communities, that of the young man and that of the girl, are united by a bond that can be broken only for the gravest reasons, and even then a rupture will usually give rise to serious disagreements.

[583] It is at this point that the parties agree, not without much argument and bargaining, on the amount, type, and mode of payment of the bride price and the date on which the girl will be handed over.

Between the time of the agreement and the release of the woman, there is a period which is often very long and in some cases several years. This interval is used by the girl's mother to prepare the things she will give her daughter (clothing, household utensils, etc.). [198] The fiancé, meanwhile, needs the time to accumulate what he has promised to pay when the girl is given to him.

584 602 From this moment on, the relations between the two communities are very strictly governed. Native etiquette forbids the fiancée henceforth to meet or to take meals with her future brother-in-law unless a third party is present. The same applies to the young man and his future mother-in-law. The fiancé must constantly show that he takes an interest in anything that concerns his future affinal family. He must attend funerals and festivals or at least send a material contribution consistent with his wealth and social standing. When field work is in progress, it is customary for the fiancé's fula-ni to appear in a body and ceremoniously share the work. This demonstration of solidarity is mostly more noisy than helpful; the work is wholly simulated, but the proceedings always end in dancing and copious drinking.

583 184 Bride price (1) and gifts. The woman is not turned over

1. In certain regions (Bougouni, Sikasso, Koutiala, San) there is no regularly constituted bride price; the bridegroom's

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family gives the bride's family a young girl to replace the one taken away.

until all or a portion of the agreed bride price has been paid and especially not before the customary gifts have been received.

The nature and value of the bride price and gifts vary since they depend on the wealth of the future husband, the rank of the woman and family customs. Among the poor, the bride price is small: a few handfuls of cowries, a chicken, a few
[435] kola nuts, a few lengths of native cotton. An average bride price is worth, in all, 25,000 to 30,000 cowries (about 25 to 30 francs). Among the rich, the bride price may include one or more slaves, gold jewelry, silver, fabrics, clothing, etc.

The same is true of the gifts; everything depends on the families involved. It is customary around Ségou, however, for the fiancé to give his bride a large piece of native material called kundugu fini, a dloké (a kind of blouse), and a pair of sandals with very thick soles. He must also, if he can afford to, give her a slave to do the kitchen work, a cow, jewelry, etc. [199]

He must also give presents to the girl's parents in accordance with his means.

The totality of the bride price and gifts is called furu-fen', literally, "the property of the marriage." As soon as part of this furu-fen' is handed over to the furu-bolo-ma-tigi, he takes it,
[273] escorted by some of the fiancé's friends, to the girl's fa. All of these proceedings, of course, involve jugs of native beer (dlo). The notables of the place, the dugu-tigi, the "elders," and even the kamalen', come at once to congratulate the family, to share in the drinking, and to receive a share of the furu-fen'.

The fiancée is often a little girl, and in that case the duties of the young man and his family go on for several years. The giving of gifts is repeated, to an extent commensurate with the young man's wealth and the standing of the girl's family.
431 At the time of harvest it is customary for the fiancé to send one
583 or more baskets of millet, each weighing 20 to 40 kilos, and from time to time, a jug of beer, 20 to 30 liters. On the

583 occasion of funerals or religious ceremonies, he brings offerings
431 (fowl, kola nuts, millet, salt, etc.). The ceremony at which his contribution is indispensable is the da woro (1). On this

1. See p. 264 below.

occasion the furu-bolo-ma-tigi is entrusted with important gifts for the girl (clothing and jewelry) as well as for the relatives assembled (food of all kinds).

583 Just as the amount and nature of the furu-fen' vary, the manner of payment and the time set for the payment of the bride price are likewise left to the discretion of the parties. There may be a single payment or there may be installments, either before or partly before and partly after the bride is handed over. From the material point of view, the persons of the bride and groom are actually of no importance. The fa who gives the bride price wants a girl from the family with which he wishes an alliance, and all that matters is that the girl be marriageable at the date agreed upon, provided that she is handed over in accordance with the agreement. In the same connection, the person giving the bride price is not required to have the whole amount needed at the time of [200] the agreement; it is sufficient that he be in a position to pay when the amount falls due. This explains certain usages which might otherwise seem odd.

[584] It often happens that a fa arranging a marriage speaks for a very young girl or even for one not yet born. If the child is handed over before nubility, the marriage is not consummated until after the first menses. We have mentioned above that in such cases the marriage payment involves repeated gifts for years.

583 Another very curious method of paying the bride price
231 is to follow a custom called "the mare's foot." Its essential features are as follows.

A person giving bride price has a mare that he could sell to pay off the obligation, but he prefers to promise one or more of the foals or, as the natives say, one or more of "feet." This method of turning a brood mare to account without selling it is common among the natives of western Sudan.

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231 If the payer has promised "a foot," he turns the mare over to the recipient, who will have to feed it and breed it. The latter keeps the foal and returns the mare after the foal is weaned; the risk is his, unless a major catastrophe occurs, and he must prove that such was the case.

If two "feet" are called for, the mare is as it were, jointly owned, each person alternately taking care of the animal and exploiting it for an agreed period. The first foal is jointly held, and after it is weaned, the contracting parties equalize the costs by alternately caring for the mare and the foal. This continues until three foals have been born and weaned. Then the mare and one of the foals goes into one share and the other two foals in another; the share allotted to each party is determined by drawing lots.

When he has completed the payment of "feet," the payer can obtain the woman without having paid any of the bride price since her family has the mare as security.

584 It may happen that one or the other of the fiancés dies. In principle, it is well to bear in mind the material standpoint involved: persons are secondary in concluding the affair; the two fa look out for their respective interests while finding a solution to the difficulties that [201] arise during the period of betrothal, often a very long one. The dead fiancé is not uncommonly replaced by one of his brothers (1), and the girl by one of

1. More commonly by one of the sons of the fiancé's community.

her sisters (2); nothing changes in either case. If the fiancé or

2. More commonly by one of the daughters of the fiancée's community.

fiancée cannot be replaced in this way, the disposition of the furu-fen' already received by the girl's family is decided by agreement between the parties. Sometimes the proceeds are divided, with half going to each community; at other times they may be returned to the groom's family, or conversely, they may be left with the bride's family.

584 Though disrupted marriage arrangements are rare, this may happen through a variety of causes and is settled by agreement or, in case of conflict, by arbitrators.

585 Delivery of the bride. Because this act involves a change of status for the parties concerned, it requires the ritual practices of a magical character of which we saw an example in connection with the funeral of a fa. Their purpose is to make sure that change takes place without harm to anyone.

When the payer has fulfilled his obligations and behaved according to custom, the girl must be given to him on the date agreed upon. On that day, the furu-bolo-ma-tigi and the fiancé's friends, accompanied by musicians, appear at the home of the girl's parents to receive and lead away the bride. The parents agree, but the girl has disappeared. The newcomers start at once to look for her, but she cannot be found because her relatives and friends help her to hide. The hunt arouses both sides and leads to brawls; as the excitement reaches its height, the girl is found. Only the intervention of the dugu-tigi himself can put an end to the conflict. He gives his permission to the furu-bolo-ma-tigi to take the girl away and advises her to follow.

Then the furu-bolo-ma-tigi and his companions, acting as an escort, [202] take the girl toward the exit from the village. Just as she is about to leave the enclosure, however, she refuses to go a step farther, and the young men pretend to do violence to her in order to force her to accompany them in spite of her cries. She fights and screams until she is beyond the limits of the village territory. Then she suddenly becomes calm, wraps herself in the large piece of cloth given by her fiancé, and gaily follows her companions, who carry her furu-fen' and have by now joined the group of the furu-bolo-ma-tigi. The troop of young men bring up the rear and make a great racket with drums and trumpets and from time to time give the traditional [583] marriage cry: "kuyo! kuyo! (1)."

1. This simulated abduction must be interpreted as a separation rite.

585 The well-known cry of the wara-mina-den' of the fiancé's brotherhood is heard at various points along the way; the god is watching over his disciple's fiancée and chasing evil spirits from her path.

When they approach the fiancé's village, the young men go to the head of the procession, while the fiancée's companions take their places behind her. The whole troop begins to dance to the rhythm of the drums and trumpets. The women seem to hold back and take a long time to reach the entrance to the village a few hundred meters away.

At this moment, the wara-mina-den' utters a loud and final cry; his mission is accomplished.

The women of the village welcome the newcomers and lead the girl to her husband's house. Other women join the procession. Several groups of singers are formed, and the dancers proceed slowly to the couple's house. There, in an inner court, the crowd settles down; everyone drinks, eats, dances, or sings as the spirit moves him.

The dressing of the bride begins as soon as she arrives. Her hair is taken down; the string and the beads she wears about her hips are removed; and she is helped with her bath. Then, wrapped in a white skirt cloth, she lies down on the nuptial couch.

Her husband joins her after escaping from his roistering friends.

At daybreak there is a sudden shot. Loud and frequent shouts of "kuyo! kuyo!" rise above singing [203] and the noise of an orchestra. The old women burst into the nuptial hut, carrying warm water for the ablutions. The husband comes out and goes off to sit on a mat in the courtyard with the furu-bolo-ma-tigi and his friends.

The bride appears wrapped in her marriage skirt; behind her the old women wave a piece of linen that gives visible evidence
[533] of the accomplishment of intercourse, and dyeli-moso (griot [Ed., feminine]) sing of love. The young girls who accompanied the bride surround her at the exit from the courtyard and lead her to a hut arranged so that she may rest there. For eight days she has all her meals there, and seated on a mat, with a white veil on her head, she spends the days spinning with her companions.

585 The husband spends the whole day after the wedding night in his hut, where relatives, friends, and neighbors come to congratulate him and present minor gifts of food. He invites them to eat and drink. The wedding is thus prolonged for several days, depending on the husband's wealth, during which time the couple is at the disposal of the guests.

[556] Rich families like to show off the trousseau, jewels, and gifts bestowed on the bride, so during the whole day after the wedding night everything is paraded with great pomp through the village by people of caste who proclaim the items and exaggerate their value. Toward evening the presents are shown one last time to the bride, who sits on a low bench with her face hidden behind a kind of tray, woven with grass, which she holds in her [533] hand. Drums and other instruments make a great uproar, while a female griot, standing behind the bride, sings love songs. Every- [302] one admires the bride's hair, which is artistically braided in a flat crest with two small braids on each side of the face hanging in front and behind the ears. The women finger her jewels as they admire them and her thick-soled sandals.

To conclude the ceremony, the furu-bolo-ma-tigi gives cowries to the leader of the singing, and guns are fired for the [481] last time. Then the bride gets up, glides over the ground without lifting her feet, and enters the hut with her companions, while the guests retire. [204]

Second Marriage

595 The number of wives is limited only by the necessity of providing each one with a suitable living. This means that, theoretically, polygamy is a privilege of the rich. Some men practice it in order to pass as rich men, which flatters their pride, while others use it to gratify a sensual temperament. Most often, however, people in modest circumstances have several wives solely for economic reasons.

When an only wife has young children and no servant to help her, she is extremely overworked. When this is the case,

595 she herself urges her husband to take another wife who will share some of the housework and relieve the situation. As a result, polygamy in this form resembles an association in which, through division of labor, each person seeks to provide his own support and to contribute to the general welfare.

Second marriages are identical with first marriages except that they are celebrated with somewhat less ostentation. Furthermore, a married man is more independent of his community in the material sense, and sometimes he is likewise more independent of the wife.

II. Other Types of Conjugal Union

588 595 Besides marriage there are innumerable kinds of conjugal unions, such as agreements between capable individuals, that at times have legal consequences, some of which are even extensive. All these kinds may be grouped as two types: concubinage and free union.

595 Concubinage. This is a union in which at least one of the parties is a slave. It is very common for a master to treat one or more of his slaves like wives. Some men like the arrangement because it does away with all the difficulties arising from the bride price and the often exasperating involvements with an affinal family. Concubinage practiced by a free man has the disadvantage, however, of [205] his children being his slaves, since children retain their mother's status. It is true that this custom has been circumvented. It is accepted that the female slave is regarded as free once she has borne a child to a free husband and he has recognized it. This, however, does not erase the original stigma; children borne of free wives always [578] consider themselves superior to their siblings whose mother was a slave. Family tensions arise out of this, which become acute upon the death of the fa.

Concubinage, practiced on a large scale by free men, has, indeed, perverted all the communities. Polygamous households have had grave difficulties because the wives, being different in rank and yet forced to live side by side, have sacrificed everything to their resentments and hatreds.

588 Free union. This type of union rests on simple consent
583 by the two parties without any bride price.

In principle a woman who has ceased to belong to a husband belongs to her original community, and she can make no decisions concerning her future without its consent. If she ignores this, the community can always intervene to force her to break off any engagement she may have made, and to this end it may use any means of absolute control.

This suffices to explain why a man who agrees to a union of this kind usually finds himself in the most serious difficulties. Not only can his wife and children be taken from him without
[672] redress, but he can be sued for damages by the community to which the woman belongs.

It does sometimes happen, however, that certain women are released from the authority of their communities. These include women who are sole survivors of a community and, more commonly, those who have bought their freedom by dubious means. A free man who lives with such women achieves a union that to a great extent has the same effect as marriage. [206]

The Family

592 The household. The lawful household is based on mar-
583 riage. In order to grasp its essence, account must be taken of the interplay of two elements which are perfectly distinct but always closely involved in all human affairs: interest and sentiment. In a lawful household the essential interest is the bride price whose nature must be defined in order to understand its overwhelming importance.

583 Bride price is what is paid in exchange for a wife. It is understood that the status of the woman thus handed over does not change; if she was free before the event, she is still free after the payment of the bride price.

586 The marriage tie is such that it can always be broken by one or the other party; the one breaking the contract simply loses the bride price in the sense that if the husband initiated the rupture he cannot expect anything already paid to be returned. If the initiative was taken by the wife (or her community), then she must return what has been paid. Whatever the cause of rupture, however, the children always belong to the husband.

583 Finally, if the union is still in effect at the time of the
768 husband's death, the wife's community theoretically regains authority over her, provided that the bride price is paid back.

These three definite points show that lawful union, or
581 marriage, legally speaking, is essentially a kind of usufruct of the
626 woman to the advantage of the husband, and the price is the bride price. As a result, the woman's community is obliged to see to it that the husband enjoys his rights. Hence, when a wife misbehaves, no matter how, the husband reports it to her community which takes steps to bring the erring girl to terms for fear of having to refund the bride price. On the other hand, the husband is expected to treat his wife in a manner worthy of her, that is, with consideration for her origins, and if he fails to do so, he risks the consequences of breach of the marriage contract.

There are, therefore, reciprocal rights and duties required of the spouses. Based on the marriage contract, these rights and duties are reinforced, completed, or, more generally, influenced by ethics no less than by the feelings of the [207] couple in relation to each other and to their respective communities.

581 This is why a girl from a great house with high standing (1)
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1. Thus, in the western Sudan, the daughters of the Massa-si are treated with great deference.

cannot be treated like a common concubine, even though the husband may prefer the concubine to the wife, because the free daughter of a powerful house, richly dowered, is virtually independent in the household. If she is sufficiently well off, she may even live in a house of her own, and since her only obligation is the sexual conjugal duty, she receives her husband as she would a lover.

On the other hand the free woman of modest circumstances and, even more, of lowly birth is her husband's companion in wretchedness. She does all kinds of work, even the hardest and most disagreeable, and she desires no rupture that would deprive her of the only affection that sustains her, the love of her children.

562 Between the omnipotence of the first and the humble
581 lot of the second there is every possible gradation. This is all
595 the more true in that, thanks to polygamy, lawful households may be found in association with the free unions and concubinage desired by the husband, in such a way that the position of each person in the family, already affected by all these contingencies, is, in the last analysis, dominated by the absolute authority of the fa. We shall see this clearly in connection with filiation, and it is no less apparent regarding wives, except for those already described who have sufficient influence and the means to live virtually independent of the rest of the family. Although in fact a wife who was not paid for has no regular position and her children legally do not belong to either of their parents, although a concubine does not even count as a person, according to custom, and her children are their genitor's slaves, merely by the will of the fa either of them may have an enviable pre-eminence in the family, especially envied by the lawful wives.

593 Under these circumstances, it may be admitted that con-
562 jugal duties, obedience, fidelity, and their counterparts, the rights to help and assistance, have nuances that vary from one situation to another. It is true that a wife must obey her husband and that he is allowed to resort to [208] corporal punishment to control her, which he does not fail to use. She is not completely at his mercy, however. For instance, he can require her to live in a given place; nevertheless, if it has been agreed that she is not to leave the tribal territory, and this usually tacitly understood, he may not take her away. He can force her to do household chores, but if she is free, he cannot require her to do servile tasks. In the same way, he cannot rent out her services, put her up as security, or sell her.

837 The duty of reciprocal fidelity is most often very vague.
Admittedly, this is not expected of the husband, and indeed, the wife often encourages his lapses from virtue on the theory that this indulgence will attach him to her. As far as a wife's misbehavior is concerned, a husband does not always give it much importance and is sometimes not at all averse to profiting
[848] from it. If children result from her indiscretions, he is not distressed in the least about accepting or denying them.

595 A husband owes his wife food, clothing, and lodging within his means, and unless he has imprudently acquired too many wives, everything will be kept within the proper limits. In any event, he must be impartial toward all his wives on one particular point if he wants domestic tranquillity: he must honor each of them in turn with his favors.

In theory, a husband is supposed to treat his wives alike in all things, although it is apparent from the foregoing that this is practically impossible. Besides, it is usually agreed that the first wife, no matter who she is, whether slave or free, has certain prerogatives. She acts as a kind of mother to her co-wives, supervises their work and their pursuits, and issues all the supplies. With reference to her husband, she acts as confidante and adviser.

851 Filiation. This is to be regarded as the totality of facts which, for the sake of clarity, we shall divide into two groups: birth, and giving a name. [209]

Birth. A pregnant woman, by virtue of her condition,
843 is subject to a kind of special regime whose special features are the following.

In principle, she must forego sexual relations from the moment she feels the child move until two or three months after its birth. This is not done for reasons of hygiene, but rather because the child is thought to require it as a kind of deference, without which it will die.

From the standpoint of diet, the expectant mother should be well and even abundantly fed. When possible she is given the
[262] heart and liver of slaughtered wild animals; these are centers of life which, if eaten, will strengthen the child's soul and make the child a courageous individual. A pregnant woman often wants some
[261] of the yellow or red clay which is sold in the markets, which
[443] for some unknown reason she will eat as if it were chocolate.

She must refrain from visiting dying people, attending funerals, going into mourning, or mingling with crowds, all this in order to avoid any contact that might injure the fragile soul she is carrying.

843 A Bambara has no very exact idea of the duration of pregnancy. His deductions, based on appearances alone, lead him to believe that a child born completely formed must have been in the mother's womb longer than one less well-formed. [845] Besides, it is believed that conception may be due to some spirit who had relations with the woman (1). Children born with some

1. See above, in the chronicle of Kaarta, the tale about Deni-ba Bo, who had relations with a mabo woman who claimed a connection with a spirit in the form of a horse.

strange or abnormal characteristics are thought to be the result of such affairs, and the fact that some women give birth only to stillborn infants is attributed to the same cause.

The pregnant woman is advised to go about her domestic chores up to the very moment of [210] her confinement and, in particular, to continue to grind grain, no doubt to facilitate labor, especially for those who are mothers for the first time.

844 When the labor pains begin, the woman retires to her hut, accompanied by matrons famed for their experience in these matters. Men, including the husband, may not come near the patient.

845 If there is a breach presentation or any other complication, the women do what they can, based on their personal experience, the inspiration of the moment, or the current superstitions. As a last resort they call in the magician or the marabout, which amounts to the same thing. Neither one is allowed to see the patient, but must work from the outside, using magic passes, incantations, or prayers and prescribing suitable remedies.

844 To deliver the baby, the mother ordinarily squats with her hands behind her head or kneels with her hands against the wall. The eldest or most skillful of the attending matrons ties the umbilical cord and then cuts it. This operation is often badly done and causes the umbilical hernia with which so many natives are afflicted and which is regarded, indeed, as a deformation in

844 good taste. The placenta is buried outdoors near the hut or sometimes in the floor of the hut itself. The mother is washed and often given an infusion to drink which is alleged to stop bleeding.

The baby is washed several times and then anointed with vegetable fat (1) (se tlu) or butter made from cow's milk. Its

1. Known to Europeans as karite, originally a Soninké word.

head is massaged to give it a nice shape, and then the baby is wrapped in a white cloth.

The child is usually not fed for the first 24 hours, although it is sometimes given a few drops of goat's milk, a beverage with mystical qualities. It is then given the breast.

851 At the earliest possible moment the father must be informed of the birth and sex of the child. Indeed, he is brought in by the woman who cut the cord, and the mother shows him the baby, pointing out any body characteristic which seems to her a manifest sign that the child is a reincarnation [211] of a deceased member of the family or other evidence that there has been some influence from the invisible world.

[203] The same woman informs the local authorities (dugu-tigi, nyana-n-son-na-ba, etc.) and the people in the vicinity; the news spreads rapidly.

846 The mother resumes her normal activities as soon as possible and is often on her feet within 24 hours. In any event, she never remains in bed for more than a week, unless it is absolutely impossible for her to get up. For seven or eight days, however, she remains in seclusion. Furthermore, particularly in Kaarta, her food is prepared exclusively by girl friends of her choice.

[751] The detachment of the umbilical cord marks the end of this period of seclusion. In Kaarta the cord is preserved and placed in a small bag which is tied around the baby's neck; later on it will be made into a precious talisman. It is only after the detachment of the cord that the child is considered to be definitely

846 born. In this we see another of the interim periods which accompany any change of status (death, marriage, circumcision, etc.). The real entry of the child into social life is marked by giving it a name.

553 851 Giving the name. Naming the child is the prerogative of the father, and he must take into consideration the various circumstances or incidents which marked the birth; through this act the child is received into the family.

At Ségou, family heads, relatives, neighbors, and friends are all invited to this ceremony, especially the dugu-tigi or, more exactly, the nyana-n-son-na-ba. In order of rank and seniority they arrive on the day set and squat in front of the entry to the courtyard which gives access to the mother's hut. The religious leader (nyana-n-son-na-ba) enters the mother's hut and shaves the head of the child whom the mother holds on her knees.

While this is going on, the women, relatives, neighbors, and friends approach in single file, singing, clapping their hands, and at intervals shouting: "Kuyo! Kuyo!" They give millet and cotton to the mother.

After shaving the baby's head, the leader puts his hands on the child, strokes its back and chest, and spits in its face to ward off evil spirits. Then he emerges and sits outside among his people. [212] The father then gives him eleven kola nuts, and the family heads in turn give him 40 to 50 cowries; all this is placed on a woven tray.

At this point, the leader asks the father what name he has selected for the child. Before answering, the father requests that the kola nuts and cowries be divided, they constitute the tua sara "price of the name." Two kola nuts and half of the cowries are given to the mother; the rest is divided among the family heads present. These are the ni wuru, "kola of life," and the tua kolo, "cowrie of the naming." Then the father makes known the name and the reasons for his choice. What are these reasons? It may be some obvious sign that the child is a reincarnation of someone deceased, some incident marking the child's birth, etc. Everyone congratulates the father on the happy event and expresses good wishes for the baby and blessings on the parents.

553 851 [562] Women are not admitted to the men's circle. Gathered near the mother's hut, they know that a name has been given, but do not know what it is. The woman who tied the cord then washes the baby three times in warm, soapy water and, taking water into her mouth, sprinkles the tiny body from neck to lower back three times. She then expresses her good wishes. Carrying the child, she goes to the door of the hut, where the father and family heads are waiting, and asks the name. Then she returns to the women and places the child on the lap of an old woman who blows into the baby's ears three times and then shouts in each ear: "Kuyo! Kuyo! i tua dara, "that is, "Kuyo! Kuyo! [854] your name is ...." The child is then wrapped in the narrow swaddling band which the mother will henceforth use to carry him on her back, and if it is a boy, the baby is rolled three times over the blade of an ax, or if a girl, over an iron implement for picking cotton. While this is going on, everyone is expressing best wishes.

[184] In Kaarta the ceremony is somewhat different. A beef or a sheep killed in front of the mother's hut, and dege [Ed., coarsely ground millet in water] is also prepared. The baby's [564] head is shaved, and the hair is placed on the dege. Each guest puts his right hand on the edge of the gourd and a griot expresses good wishes for the newborn child. Then the guests dance around the dish of dege; the hair is removed from it and given to the mother to keep. [213] Then if the occasion warrants it, the [364] three lines of tattooing peculiar to the Koulouhali are made on the baby's face with a dagger. Finally the griot takes the child, carries it around the crowd, and returns it to the father, who must then make known the chosen name. When the father has pronounced the name, the griot again takes the child and, making a trumpet of his hands, cries out to him three times: "your name is...."

551 In principle, the name (tua) recalls some circumstance surrounding the birth. A posthumous child is usually given his father's name, as though he were the reincarnation of the father, or more commonly, he is called Fa-n-ko, "posthumous" (literally, "the one who came after the fa"). If the baby shows some resemblance to a deceased person, he is named for the person or,

551 more often, called sagi, "the one who has come back." A woman who was barren for a long time gives her child the name of the agent to whom she attributes the cessation of her sterility: Nyana-m-ba, "the great nyana"; Mori-ba, "the great marabout," etc. She does the same thing if she has triumphed over some evil spirit through the aid of some such intermediary, but in that case it is usual to abandon the child at birth; a substitute mother will rescue it. This is a "castoff" child (fili), and from this comes his name, Fili. Such a child may be named for the place where it was abandoned, Sunkun', "refuse heap," for instance, or for his rescuer, Numuke, "blacksmith," or Dyelike, "griot." A child who survives after a series of stillbirths is regarded as the incarnation of an evil spirit finally defeated, and the spirit in question is, so to speak, stigmatized by having the child called Malo-bali, "shameless," or Tuantan', "anonymous." The tua is often merely the name of the month, day, or season of birth: Tenen' "Monday"; Sunkalo, "month of Ramadan"; Sama, "winter season." Twins are both called Fune, literally, [845] "alike," but they are sometimes purposely differentiated by calling one of them Sio and the other Sie-koro (1); if the twins are

1. See Humblot.

girls, they are called Wassa and Bafune (1) [Ed., footnote above]. In the Bani area, the next child born after twins is called Konimba (1) [Ed., footnote above]. A child born when it had appeared that the mother would have no more children is called Kosa (1) [Ed., foot note above], literally, "business completed." There are families [214] who always use the same name for the eldest sons. Among the Massa-si at one period this name was Bo (1) from which come: Musu-kura Bo; Sira Bo; etc. (meaning

1. Bo is etymologically the same as Ngolo.

"Bo, whose mother was Musu-kura"; "Bo, whose mother was named Sira"; etc.). In Ségou the Koulouhali likewise adopted

551 the tua Ngolo, from which come Nyana Ngolo, Barama Ngolo, Solo-Ngolo, etc. In the family of the Bambara chiefs of Femay (2) (a canton in the circle of Djeimé), the eldest son was

2. See Humblot.

given the name of the paternal grandfather; the second son was called Moussa; the third, Abdoullah; the fourth, Ngizi; and the fifth, Souleyman. The girls were called, in order of age: first, Fatouma; second, Awa; third, Nyele-ba or Nye-ba; fourth, Dyomene; fifth, Kounadi; and the sixth, Aminata (2) [Ed., footnote 2 above].

There are other names very commonly used for the eldest child: Ntyi and its endless variants for boys; Nya or Nyele for eldest daughters. The last two are so common in the Ségou region that the Soninké derisively designate the Bambara of that area with the expression, Nya ni Nyele-u, "the people of Nya and
[606] Nyele." Since husband and wife are forbidden by custom to pronounce the names of their respective parents-in-law, complications arise when, as often happens, a child is named for them. Respect for the interdict is preserved by using a paronym: for a boy, Tye-koro, "the old man"; for a girl, Moso-koro, "the old woman." To satisfy this same interdict, there are true synonyms locally: thus, for Mussa the name Dyigi is used; for Mori-ba, Bo-dyan. Individuals are often designated by these double names whose two parts are synonymous; thus, there are the Mussa-Dyigi or Dyigi-Moussa, the Bodyan-Moriba, and so forth.

The foregoing are some of the characteristic traits that show how individuals are named among the Bambara, but actually the subject is inexhaustible.

846 After the name-giving ceremony, the mother resumes her normal life, although she must still observe certain prohibitions: notably, there must be no sexual intercourse for the first three months; and during the same period she must not change her coiffure nor leave the village. Once this period is over, she covers herself with jewelry, [215] beads and pieces of amber -- borrowed from neighbors or relatives, if need be -- rubs the baby with butter, and goes to present him to the local notables.

853 A child is nursed for two or even three years, and theoretically, a woman should abstain from sexual intercourse throughout this period. In practice, however, the period of three months mentioned above is the limit of such abstention.

854 Childhood. While he is small, the child remains with his mother, whether she cares for him herself, has him cared for by a slave especially designated for the duty, or turns him over to one of her daughters.

During the nursing period of two or even three years, he is carried astraddle by his mother or some other person entrusted with his care until his legs are strong enough for him to run about the house and its vicinity.

857 At about six or eight years old, he is drawn into the juvenile organization known as n-tomo, and he never fails to join it as soon as he is welcome. Little girls are less free; they are kept at home and put to work at household duties, such as bringing water and wood and watching the fire.

881 Puberty. As we shall see, the n-tomo prepares the child for the soli, a ceremony which marks the most important event of his life, civil puberty. The essential but not the only rite involved in this ceremony is circumcision. In principle, the soli is limited to pubescent boys and this implies that all who go through the ceremony have physically reached puberty. Aside from the fact, however, that this condition is reached at differing ages, the boys who undergo the ceremony differ in age because the soli does not take place every year, owing to the considerable expense involved.

892 When the soli is behind him, a boy is no longer a child; he is not exactly a man either, but rather is a "young master," a kamalen'. Since he is admitted to the brotherhoods, apparently his discretion can be counted on, and he is considered competent to take an oath so he can be called upon to testify in a dispute. Also, if he is enterprising enough to attract attention to himself, he is given trifling missions which inspire him to persevere. Furthermore, since by now he has been made sophisticated by his companions in the n-tomo, his relations with his female companion

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882 in the [216] soli, the n-golo-moso, and with other girl friends
[836] are not merely platonic; indeed, sexual licentiousness is common.

As in everything else, a girl's life is more restricted. For her, the soli is merely a way of being presented to society, as we would say, that is, a means of attracting a prospective husband.

884 Coming-of-age, guardianship, deprivation of civil rights. It is obvious from the above that a Bambara has no way of knowing his age with any certainty. At best, he can estimate it by referring to some important event known to have occurred at about the time of his birth.

Since this is the case, we can see that coming-of-age has no correlation with chronological age. The individual's physical development and, still more, his intellectual maturity are signs that lead his family to grant a kamalen' the rights that distinguish a man from a boy. The most important of these rights is assuredly that of taking a wife and founding a family.

As a matter of fact, the soli marks the point after which the young people of both sexes are deemed competent to contract
[582] marriages. Indeed, girls of 16 or 18 years of age and boys over 25 are rarely unmarried. It should further be understood that a girl may be betrothed at birth or even when she is being carried in the womb, as has been explained above.

429 Guardianship is intended to protect the individual from
562 the follies of inexperience and the natural weakness of the female sex, a weakness to be understood here to include not only actual lack of physical strength but also incompetence imposed by custom which forbids a woman any power whatever over community rights or property. This is why young men are subject to guardianship until the fa, in council, recognizes their right to exercise the prerogatives of man's estate. In principle, women are subject to guardianship throughout their lives.

429 During his married life, the father is the legal administrator of any properties coming to his minor children, and he usually employs such property with discretion since he is legally bound to render an account when the children reach their majority.

429 A person who is away for a long or indefinite period [217] delegates the direction of the family community for as long as necessary to a friend or relative. This substitute, however, is expected to act only in accordance with the customary counsel and the family of the absent person.

[586] In case of divorce, the children always remain with the father. A divorced woman again comes under the guardianship of her own community.

768 When the mother dies, the father retains the administra-
429 tion of her property which belongs jointly to her children. If, however, one of her sons is married or of marriageable age and is competent, all such property is supposed to be handed over to him to administer in his capacity as fa of the uterine community.

When a father dies, his minor children are placed under the guardianship of the patriarch under whose authority the deceased was living. If he was independent, guardianship would be set up in accordance with his wishes which he would not have failed to make known.

In any event, if one of his sons is married or of marriageable age and sufficiently competent, he becomes fa of the familial community which gradually, as the younger sons grow up and establish families of their own, becomes a patriarchy such as we have described above.

[641] According to native law, deprivation of civil rights does not exist. In fact, however, persons who by reason of ill-health or senility are unable to comply with custom in carrying out their functions are supplanted by such persons as are designated by custom to replace them at the time of death.

596 Faya. The faya is the authority and power of the fa
614 over all his dependents. It has the same character, differing only in extent, whether it concerns a familial or a patriarchal community.

Familial faya. Within the family, the fa theoretically has complete authority over everything that constitutes this community. It makes little difference whether he acts on his own initiative or whether he allows himself to be swayed by the

596 opinion of those around him, his intimates and friends. He
614 exercises the right of agrarian usufruct over the lands under cultivation, and he may dispose of movable property without restriction. As regards persons, his own issue [218] are at his mercy, and he profits from their labor. He can hire them out, put them up for security, sell them, and even put them to death. He has the right of conjugal usufruct over his wives, and his slaves are merely chattels.

Patriarchal faya. This differs in extent from the foregoing. Anything connected in whatever way to the patriarchal community itself or to the family communities under its authority comes under the patriarchal faya.

Though the maintenance of this power presents no problems in theory, practice is quite another matter.

The fact is that the fa of a familial community is completely subject to a patriarch only if, being connected through the male line, he has some property in the patriarchy or intends to claim rights in it.

If this is not the case, the familial fa acts as though he did not belong to the patriarchy, and the latter can only treat him accordingly. This is what happens when a "son" goes off, establishes himself far away, and prospers there by his own efforts and at his own risk. Breaking all agnatic ties, he in fact frees himself from any authority that his patriarchy might seek to impose upon him.

This has produced innumerable dissident branches which have the same dyamu but which can only hypothetically trace their descent through the males back to a common male ancestor.

Inheritance. It is necessary, first, to know whether the
428 deceased was a fa or a fantan', that is, whether he exercised the authority of a fa or was under the authority of a fa.

Let us say the deceased was a fa.

In principle, if he was fa of a family, everything belonging to him remains undivided under the new faya of his eldest son.

If he was fa of a patriarchy, a new patriarch succeeds him.

It is unnecessary to belabor these points or the consequences of the variations in view of the details given above.

428 Now let us say the deceased was a fantan', that is, he did not exercise a faya. [219]

A son who dies before becoming fa rarely leaves any property. If he should by chance do so, such wealth theoretically belongs to the community of which he was a member. The disposition of property from special sources must be settled according to the nature of the source. Thus, property which the deceased may have inherited from his mother would go to his uterine heirs.

What has just been said of a son applies all the more to a daughter, since, after all, she is nothing more than a kind of property belonging to the community.

428 567 The most hapless fantan' is the slave. In principle, he could hardly be expected to leave an inheritance since even his own person does not belong to him. In fact, however, the situation is quite different. A slave generally does have some property and may even be very rich. His fa allows him the use of his property for his lifetime, and it is current practice for him to leave it likewise to his children. As a result, everything transpires just as though the deceased were a free man, and what we have said about other communities applies to this type of community which, strictly speaking, has only a kind of de facto existence. The action of custom, in freeing the slave, gives him access to the position of a free man without depriving him of what his fa has allowed him to enjoy. In the end, this enjoyment of use is gradually transformed and strengthened by inheritance until it is the equivalent of similar rights to property which are accorded to men born free.

596 614 Order of succession. Patriarchal community. The fa is the eldest of the surviving males who are direct descendants in the male line of the fa who founded the community.

428 596 614 Familial community. 1. The eldest surviving son of the deceased; upon his death, succession follows the same pattern as for the patriarchal community.

If there are only daughters, the property is divided among them.

428 2. If there are no children, the collateral males and,
596 lacking them, the wives.
3. If there are no collateral relatives, the ascendants.
614 4. If there are no ascendants, the surviving spouse.
5. If there is no surviving spouse, escheat occurs: [220] the inheritance reverts to the head of the settlement, the dugutigi, when this settlement is independent; otherwise to the head of the clan, the fama.

596 The community and the individual. The result of the
614 foregoing is that the individual, whoever he may be and whatever his situation, has no value except as a member of a community (1); it is the community that exists and has an identity,

[567] 1. A slave has no rights because, as a person, he belongs to no community.

while the individual exists and is identified only through the community and for the community.

An individual who exists apart from any faya is, therefore, an anomaly, and this situation comes to an end as soon as the individual himself becomes fa.

596 There are cases, however, when an individual is put out
614 of his community because of his own action or because of circumstances, and extraordinary changes of status result.
626 Anyone driven from his community for bad conduct loses his rights to the faya in that community.

564 If his disqualification results from the practice of a trade
558 regarded as degrading, he falls into what the Bambara call nyama-ka-la and Europeans call "people of caste." Henceforth he is not only excluded from his community, but he lives apart from all persons not declassed; he is a free man of inferior standing. He usually lives under the protection of a community of persons not declassed, earning his living from it and deriving from it such consideration as may be sometimes given him.

564 Among the Bambara, the nyama-ka-la include: the
463 numu, blacksmiths, whose wives are usually potters; the loro, who work with copper; the garanke, who work leather; and the kule, who work with wood and are sometimes saddlers.

564 The hunters (donso), who form powerful and feared associations, and the somono [Somono] and bozo [Bozo], who are fishermen, have a less restricted status than the above-mentioned artisans.

The dyeli who has fallen to the level of a domestic factotum is the most scorned of all. He receives some consideration and, in exceptional cases, notable esteem only through his worth as family archivist.

564 The term nyama-ka-la is derived from nyama, [221] meaning "ordure" or "outcast," and these people are outcasts. They are scorned. Some are particularly feared: the blacksmiths and the dyeli. The former are reputed, not without cause, to be given to the practice of magic and even sorcery. The dyeli have a fancy for poisoning.

Since persons of caste are free, they may contract marriage, that is, a lawful union, and found families just as free, non-caste persons do. Their male children naturally inherit the father's status which, thus, is handed down indefinitely through the male line.

Ordinarily they intermarry within the caste although sometimes a member of one caste may marry a member of another.

558 564 Any non-caste individual who marries a member of a caste automatically loses status. A woman who does so is henceforth considered to be a person of caste, and her children necessarily have the status of their father. A man is less seriously affected, and it is not at all rare for a man of standing to have a wife of caste. This is indubitably a misalliance; children of such a union are not highly regarded, and this reflects on the father.

564 On the other hand, it is entirely normal and common to have persons of caste among one's friends. There is hardly a person of consequence who does not have several of them as boon companions.

Although the fact of belonging to a caste carries with it a definite status, the caste member is not necessarily expected to practice the traditional trade. A member of the numu caste may very well know nothing whatever about ironwork and may

564 engage only in agriculture. Furthermore, casual or temporary practice, in one's own home, for instance, of one of the reputedly menial trades is not considered degrading.

567 596 614 Theoretically, enslavement does not exclude an individual from his own community nor in any way demean him in relation to it (1); if he returns, he recovers his rights just as

1. For example, Dêssé-Koro, taken in captivity to Ségou, returned to Kaarta where he exercised the faya of the Massa-si.

though he had never been away.

On the other hand, at the place where he is a slave, an individual belongs to no community (as a person), and that is why he has no rights and is treated as a chattel.

567 We have shown earlier how, aided by time and circumstances, a slave may manage to escape some of the limitations of his status, but strictly speaking, [222] he can never escape this status. If in fact, as the chronicle says of Ngolo Dyara, a slave succeeds in attaining a position whose importance would seem to obliterate the stigma of servitude, the blemish of slavery nevertheless remains indelible.

4. Relations between Communities

596 614 621 The true social unit is the community. Even when no special organization links them, communities are often linked by numerous bonds. This involves no distinction by race, incidentally, since more often than not ethnically diverse peoples live together in the same region.

These bonds between communities may be classified under two heads: kinship and alliance.

Kinship

[503] The influence of kinship is very extensive. Thus, a single patriarchal community includes the familial communities

596 of all the male members of the community, and agnate and
614 uterine communities coexist in each familial community.
621 Furthermore, every familial community automatically becomes
602 a patriarchal community upon the death of its head, and it is then composed of its own familial communities.

What actually happens, then, is that under the original patriarchal community are grouped an ever increasing number of other patriarchies or families, each of which includes its agnate or uterine communities. When the original patriarchy is an old one, it is obvious that a large number of persons will be living under its aegis, all of whom have dyamu and tne in common.

It may happen, however, that through time and a variety of circumstances branches become separated from the trunk, and to mark their new status, to perpetuate the memorable achievement of their founder, some of these groups have adopted a special dyamu and particular tne. At first the new dyamu is simply added to the original one, but later on the new one comes to be the only one used. However that may be, the principal characteristics [223] of the original community still persist, with a few new traits merely superimposed.

Since every secondary community in turn generates like communities, it goes without saying that the communities most distant from the original one have only a few traits in common with it, but their kinship never becomes extinct.

What are the effects of this kinship? On the one hand, it requires all concerned to observe their common duties to the community: in particular to respect ancestral traditions relative to the cult; to give mutual aid; to recognize the authority of the current fa who, for his part, is obliged to protect all his relatives, no matter how remote the connection.

As far as outsiders are concerned, kinship requires everyone to respect all pacts between communities. One can often observe fidelity to these alliances which may be hundreds of years old. If by chance people who have previously never seen each other learn of their respective dyamu and the attendant obligations, they will at once assume the reciprocal obligations contracted by their ancestors.

2: Monteil--243 G-5 (1902-1923) 1924 FA8 Bambara FA8

Alliance

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The types of alliance between communities appear to differ widely, but in actual fact all alliances are based on a religious or magic rite and, more generally, on an oath.

Four forms of alliance particularly deserve attention: the tne or interdict, the oath, marriage, and the common cult.

I. The tne. The native regards the invisible world as a duplicate of the visible world, complete with communities. He carries the analogy even to those things which we call inanimate objects. That is why, when a native binds himself to an interdict, he is not promising to respect such and such a person or thing but, rather, the community of which he believes the person or thing to be a representative. Besides, just as the interdict applies to the whole community to which the object of the interdict belongs, it also binds all the members of the community whose fa instituted it. [224]

The basis of the alliance is the oath of the fa, any infraction of which automatically brings the most dreadful calamities upon the guilty party. It is like a sacrament, which the descendants of the fa must respect in infinitum.

The chronicle of Ségou shows us how such an oath happens to be made. Upon reaching the Niger, and having no means of crossing it, Ntchi in his peril called upon his ancestors for help. His prayer was answered: a poyon' appeared and ferried him and his people to the opposite shore. In gratitude for this service, Ntchi swore that the fish would henceforth be sacred to him and to his descendants. By this act, all poyon' became tne for Ntchi and his descendants, although this does not mean that there was a cult of the fish. It was a kind of alliance or covenant, analogous to one between human communities and with similar effects; it entailed some sort of reciprocal brotherly mutual aid. In practice, a Kouloubali descended from Ntchi must never, under any circumstances whatsoever, voluntarily harm a poyon', his tne, on pain of the most disastrous consequences. If he has done so inadvertently, he can atone with sacrifices or appropriate penance, which his own intuition or a diviner suggests. He must always, in so far as the need arises,

596 assist his tne, while showing it the greatest respect. The mystical basis of this alliance sometimes causes the native to behave in a particular way toward his tne: he will not look straight at it; he will not touch it, unless absolutely forced to do so, and then he will apologize and ask forgiveness.

Anything may be the object of a tne, but there is probably not a single Bambara family which does not have some animal as tne. Expressions which the natives in general and the Bambara in particular use to make foreigners understand their relations with this animal tne have made many Europeans think that the native regards the animal as a relative in the literal sense of the word. This is not the case, as we have just seen, and consequently Bambara totem is a purely European invention (1). [225]

1. It should be understood that the tne has many sources besides one mentioned here, which is the only one pertinent to this chapter. Thus, Bala refused to pronounce any word having the syllable da (p.); Sounsan abstained from the kulé (p. , footnote 1).

596 II. The oath. In native society, a man who is ambitious or merely anxious to establish a powerful community can do so only with the support of faithful allies. Massa and Biton not only succeeded in dominating their young companions, but they also bound them closely through the oath and the cult.

Undoubtedly all the founders of powerful communities have not proceeded in exactly the same way, but all of them have employed analogous methods. An isolated individual can accomplish nothing in this social milieu where everything rests on these strongly organized collectivities, the communities. Any Bambara eager for well-being and peace will seek out and attach himself to a "powerful protector" (dyigi seme) capable of providing him with this security, even if it means the loss of his own

596 freedom. That is why any important fa is invariably surrounded
614 by a small group of intimates who are bound to his fate, often
621 by a reciprocal agreement based on an oath.

608 One of these sacramental alliances is particularly solemn; its purpose is to create a kind of kinship analogous to that which links blood brothers. There is always a profound difference between natural and contractual brotherhood, since the former exists and produces its effects independently of the will of those involved, whereas the latter exists and is valid only within the limits agreed upon by the contracting parties (1).

1. It should be noted that fraternization in its symbolic form has a necessary consequence which is not obligatory for other types of alliance by oath: it obligates the descendants of the contracting parties just as much as those undertaking the contract.

For a pact of brotherhood (dyonge) (2), the contracting

2. This term unquestionably derives from the verb siri, "to link, to unite."

parties, whether two or several, proceed as they see fit, either in public or privately in the presence of only close relatives and intimates. Each party to the agreement pricks his forearm and extracts a few drops of blood. The blood thus obtained is mixed with a small quantity of goat's milk in a receptacle. Calling upon the ancestors or some god chosen for the occasion to bear witness, each party in turn promises with a solemn oath to consider the others as his brothers. At the same time, he repeats the [228] conditions of the pact and finally sips some of the liquid.

This is the closest alliance that two Bambara can contract (1). Among other things, it forbids one to marry women

1. Blood-brotherhood was contracted

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between Deni-ba Bo for the Massa-si of Kaarta and Suleyman Ba for the people of Fouta.

belonging to the other's community, at least virgins or women reputed to be such. This is because a first sexual contact is likely to result in some flow of blood, and brotherhood imposes a terrible punishment on anyone who sheds the blood of a blood-brother or one of his people. As is apparent, the obligation undertaken by the contracting parties holds for all their descendants, regardless of sex and in infinitum. Henceforth there is a very close solidarity between the two communities, who are so bound to mutual aid that, in practice, anything (including lies, slander, and perjury) is permissible to overcome a common enemy or, in any event, to help the ally in trouble.

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In place of the brotherhood oath, many other forms of oath can be used. Thus, the chronicles tell of Sounsan and Fa Sinè forming an alliance with an oath which was undoubtedly binding, because the anvil on which it was sworn was afterwards cast into a well. Nko, Sounsan's god, received the oath under which the "young men" who were Massa's companions allied themselves to the latter's fate. At Ségou, the tondyon' likewise swore loyalty on the idols.

These sacramental agreements are endlessly varied, but they bind the parties only under the stipulated conditions, especially as regards the respective communities of the fa who take the oath.

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III. Marriage. There is no better way for a Bambara to show his attachment to someone whose alliance or friendship he desires than by giving him as a wife one of the girls of his own community and providing her with a generous dowry. This is one of the most solemn forms of alliance between communities (2).

2. People united by marriage are called furu-nyuan' (spouses) and biran' (allies).

596 614 621 583 This conjugal union differs clearly from [227] ordinary forms of marriage. In view of the fact that the husband gets a wife without paying a bride price for her, the wife is not given in usufruct, and therefore she must be treated with the greatest consideration or she may be taken back. The situation can only be normalized if the husband is rich enough to present to the donor a gift equal to or preferably, if possible, greater than the dowry brought by the wife, or he may give a similar gift to the wife (1).

1. Such property is the wife's paraphernalia.

In these situations also, the procedure varies a great deal. The donor may offer a girl from another community and provide her with a dowry. This is what Biton did in order to bind Ngolo to him: Biton gave him a girl designated by the marabouts as one of the elect, and he also provided the girl with a rich dowry.

The significance of such alliances can be estimated only when one has some knowledge of the intentions of the parties involved, especially those of the donor. We shall see one important type in the chapter on Islam, the marriage of Allah.

IV. The common cult (2). The territorial community.

311 621 776 794 2. Communities may be united under the protection of the same god. Here we shall study only their union under the protection of the "genie, master of the earth" (nyana dugu-da-sirɛ). Other common cults will be studied in the following chapter, "Brotherhoods."

In the mind of the Bambara, the earth, together with everything in it, is the property of the spirits. As a result, no one may make use of it or presume to settle on or cultivate an unused field without first going through certain ceremonies.

For this purpose, either on his own responsibility or, more often, with the aid of "the one who knows" (don-na-ba), a

311 Bambara seeks the "genie, master of the earth" (nyana dugu-da-
621 siri) or, more exactly, determines where this genie dwells. It
776 may be a spring, a hill, or a rock; often it is a fine tree, in-
794 variably surrounded by a grove or at least with a grove nearby.
Then, always following the same procedure, he finds out the conditions under which the genie will allow someone to settle in his domain in order to live there and cultivate the lands. Thus, a contract is worked out which governs the man's exploitation of the genie's territorial domain. As a result, provided he worships the genie in the manner required, the man [228] will be able to work under the protection of the god. Anyone who has had a share in the contract, even if only through representatives, will likewise profit if he scrupulously observes the conditions.

621 The establishment of a village requires the cooperation of
622 several communities, each represented by its fa. One of these fa
793 will either appropriate the leadership or be chosen as the rep-
794 resentative or chief of the others. Sometimes he may be merely primus inter pares; otherwise he may have managed to have his primacy conceded by the rest. It is this chief who treats with the genie in the name of the whole village; thus, he becomes the "high priest of the genie" (nyana-n-son-na-ba) with the essential function of "making the offerings" (son') required by the cult. Furthermore, he administers the earthly domain of the genie and is therefore called dugu-tigi (master of the earth).

To the nyana dugu-da-siri is usually attributed the same dyamu as that of its high priest, just as though the genie belonged to the spiritual family of the priest. This is a result consistent with the mentality of the Bambara.

621 The same mental state accounts for the custom in certain
776 villages of dedicating a living animal, often a ram, to the
778 nyana dugu-da-siri and believing it to be the god's mount. The
[825] animal is allowed to wander freely about the village, and its mischief is never punished; indeed, the people enjoy caressing and indulging it. The animal takes on some of the attributes of the genie and is, as it were, endowed with certain supernatural virtues, so only good can come from contact with it.

621 Theoretically, each settlement has only one genie, but
776 actually it may have several, especially if it has been settled by

621 776 successive groups, each recognizing a genie-protector. In that case, the genie first recognized and worshiped takes precedence over the others. In any case, social life requires each segment to respect the gods of its neighbors, and this respect carries with it a certain amount of superstitious fear.

311 621 794 It is evident from the foregoing that occupying and cultivating land poses certain problems for the settlement benefited, and these may be grouped under three heads: the cult of the genie-protector; the exploitation of the land; and the organization of the territorial community.

793 794 The cult. This is mainly supported by the high priest, whose principal duty is to "make the offerings" (son') to the "genie" [229] (nyana), hence his title nyana-son-na-ba. He is assisted by the council of fa, one of whom, the syere (follower), may replace him in case of need. The office of high priest is for life and is inherited in the same way as his faya. This continuity shows that the genie is actually regarded as a kind of spiritual ancestor of the priest, as we have seen from the fact that it is given the same dyamu as its high priest.

794 796 The cult ceremonies are very simple. They consist of offerings made by the high priest, who at the same time indicates to the genie the purpose for which they are being made. The most solemn ceremonies take place when millet is sown and harvested. For these occasions, every worshiper is expected to bring a contribution in proportion to his resources. The kind of gift is not specified; everyone brings whatever he can or whatever he wishes, usually animals (sheep, beef, fowl, etc.), grain, and especially millet beer (dlo).

782 796 778 + During these general gatherings, from which no one is excluded, only the high priest and the members of the council enter the sacred grove or approach the genie's abode. There, the high priest makes known the purpose of the sacrifice: to thank the genie for his past favors; to offer him the gifts brought by everyone; and to ask him to continue to protect the community so that its prosperity may be assured. Then the victims are sacrificed, and their blood is sprinkled on the tree trunk or whatever object or place is reputed to be the home of the genie.

782 genie. The same is done with libations of dlo or the juice of
796 kola nuts. Since anything offered to the genie is supposed to be
786 consumed on the spot, an orgy lasting for several days usually follows.

782 In addition to these two great obligatory ceremonies especially concerned with the exploitation of the land, the god's protection is sought by similar, but much simplified means in all affairs whether they concern the entire settlement (wars, disasters), a particular patriarchal or familial community, or even a single individual. Through the high priest as intermediary, the offering and the request are made for the purpose indicated by the petitioner, who often promises to make a further gift to the genie when his wish has been granted. Vows of this type are made very frequently.

794 The cult of his high [230] priests and of all the im-
769 portant men of the settlement is tied in with the cult of the genie, obviously a consequence of the fact that the genie is the spiritual patron of the community which honors him; its members are his children and with him form what amounts to a family. So, in line with what happens in a patriarchal or familial community, the territorial community also holds an annual festival for the dead, during which special honor is paid to noted personages, among whom deceased high priests have first place.

311 Exploitation of the land. The high priest in charge of
621 the cult likewise regulates everything concerning the exploita-
423 tion of the terrestrial domain of the genie, and in this capacity
793 he is known as the dugu-tigi (1), master of the earth. In this

1. In line with common practice, I shall henceforth use this title to designate both capacities, the high priest and the master of the earth.

office he has the help of the council of fa, and in important matters he must follow their advice.

With the help of this council, he allots the land when

311 the community is founded. His permission is required before
621 anyone may build a dwelling in the portion reserved as the seat
423 of the community; the village is therefore kept within precise
793 limits. In practice, however, everyone builds wherever he pleases if there is no objection. If there is an objection, the dispute is settled by the dugu-tigi and his council.

423 Outside the village proper, the terrain includes fields
621 which, either at the start or during the course of settlement, are allotted in perpetuity to the various fa of the community by the dugu-tigi in council. Each fa and his dependents have indefinite use of the same fields, although by law the authority which assigned them may take them away without being required to justify the act. This use is a kind of usufruct that is more extensive than that of our law, since the beneficiary may
[425] use the land without restriction, except that he may not alienate it. The tenant, however, may not use the land in any way that might be prejudicial to the community as a whole without the consent of the dugu-tigi and council. For example, such would be the case if he proposed to give his right of use to an outsider.

Any land not specifically allotted [231] and anything it produces or contains belongs, theoretically, to the member of the community who cultivates it. Certain fruits or produce, however, are sometimes reserved for the community as a whole: the leaves or fruit of the baobab, karite, nété, tamarind trees, etc.; the fish in certain ponds, watercourses, fluvial zones,
[476] etc.; the game in certain cantons, etc. On the dates set for these collective enterprises by the dugu-tigi and his council, the people proceed in a body to gather fruit, harvest the crop, fish, or hunt. Sometimes each person is allowed to keep what he has gathered; sometimes all the proceeds are collected for the dugu-tigi to distribute according to custom. There are also special regulations governing the extraction of matter or materials from the ground.

621 Organization of the territorial community. The duties
622 of the dugu-tigi and his council are not limited to directing the cult and regulating the use of land. Anything that happens within the territorial community concerns the nyana-dugu-da-siri, because the members of the community are his children

621 (den'). Proof of this is seen in the fact that any important hap-
622 pening in a native's life is supposed to be reported to the dugu-tigi and in certain cases requires an offering or, as it is called, homage (bunya). We have seen this in the case of birth, giving a name, circumcision, marriage, and death. It is no less essential in cases of public disaster (epidemic, persistent drought, invasion, war).

621 In theory, the dugu-tigi does not intervene of his own
622 accord in the private affairs of the patriarchal or familial com-
692 munities which, when taken together, constitute the territorial unit we usually call a village (1). When a quarrel between rela-

> 1. The territorial community among the Bambara is called dugu, a term which at the same time means "land" and "among," "to," "within," etc., and which is preceded by a name recalling some circumstance involved with the founding of the village.

tives cannot be settled by the fa concerned, however, he asks for the intervention of the dugu-tigi and his council. If dissension arises between the people of different communities, the same arbitration is usually requested. As a result, a kind of tribunal of conciliation has evolved, which can only suggest what the parties should do or refrain from doing in order to put an end to the dispute. Theoretically, the dugu-tigi has no right to enforce the [232] verdict (1), because the communities are

> 1. That is why litigation may be indefinitely prolonged.

extremely jealous of their independence. As a consequence, they yield only to the extent that is in their best interests.

It may happen, however, that the dugu-tigi, supported by his council, does exert authority when he has the power and is seconded by notables who make common cause with him for

621 various reasons. Thus, the dugu-tigi in council can invoke
622 police powers to maintain order in the community and even act
692 as a tribunal to punish those whose misdeeds in any way endanger the persons or property of members of the community.

621 Since the genie is expected to ensure the prosperity of
622 the faithful, it is the duty of the dugu-tigi to come to the assist-
[735] ance of members of the community who are unfortunate or indigent.

He must also maintain the relations of his community with the outside world, that is, with neighboring territorial communities and all other groupings, analogous or otherwise. He can act independently only in matters which we call purely administrative; for other matters he must have the assent of the council of fa, above all for any matter involving the disposal of community property.

621 It is obvious that all the roles of the dugu-tigi involve
622 expenses that are often considerable, but for this purpose he has
651 access to goods from many sources. In the first place, offerings made to the nyana are of various kinds; they are not always consumable, and even if they are, they are usually consumed only in part. The remainder belongs to the dugu-tigi. It is customary to give bunya (gifts of homage) to the dugu-tigi on many occasions: a hunt, a fishing expedition, millet harvest, etc.; to thank him for an allotment of land, or for some other service. Community property is farmed out for fees payable at fixed times, and tribute is paid in the same way. Most of the various kinds of infractions committed within the community are punished by fines received by the dugu-tigi. Incorrigible malefactors become slaves of the community, and the produce of their labors [233] goes to the dugu-tigi. Anything found abandoned on land belonging to the community is turned over to the dugu-tigi, in whole or in part.

In case of need arising through some exceptional emergency (war, an expedition, public works of various kinds, etc.), the dugu-tigi may have recourse to what we should call an emergency assessment, i.e., he may ask the members of the community for special contributions for the purpose.

621 These are the principal resources of the community
622 treasury, which is held and administered by the dugu-tigi with
651 the help and under the control of the fa. The dugu-tigi may
652 use the treasury to help him perform his duties honorably, to assist unfortunate or indigent members of the community, to receive the guests of the community in a suitable manner, and to meet emergencies.

[661] Under no circumstances does this treasury constitute any part of the personal fortune of the dugu-tigi. Only usurpation, which is fairly common under various guises, alters this state of affairs. In the same way, it is not uncommon for this wealth to be divided in some measure among the members of the council, who in one way or another appropriate it. Such abuses, no matter how common, do not in the least alter the principle that legally such wealth is and remains exclusively the property of the community. [234]

Chapter 4

Brotherhoods

1. The End of Childhood

794 General considerations. The cult of the ancestors and of
881 the nyana dugu-da-siri are not enough for the Bambara in his efforts to make sure of the protection, help, and services of the invisible world. The magician has created for him some renowned protectors or servitors which are powerful and formidable: the nyana of the boli.

The cult of these gods gives rise to spiritual families whose members are so closely linked by the bonds of fraternity that we may safely say that these groupings are brotherhoods. All these brotherhoods share the common characteristic that no one can be received into them before having submitted to a certain rite called soli (1) or bolo-ko (1), terms which evo

1. Soli is the word for the action of piercing, emerging, laying an egg, or

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being born; bolo-ko literally means "affair involving birth."

etymologically mean "birth."

Having entered the family through physical birth, a child enters a new phase of his life through the spiritual birth represented by the soli. Through this rite, a child in fact ceases to belong to sexless childhood and becomes: the boy, a man; the girl, a woman. Let us look at the stages of this change of status which is truly the principal event of a native's life.

857 Until he is about seven years old, a small boy lives in daily contact with his mother, only slipping away, as time goes on, to play nearby with his friends.

During this period, one can already observe the influence [235] of the native milieu on the development of his young soul. He has watched cult and magic practices, and he too plays at being a magician to kill or capture rats, lizards, and other small animals for his little feasts. He collects roots with simulated rites and attaches them to his toy bow so as to ensure the success of his hunting, believing that he has attracted a spirit by promising an offering of the blood of his victims. He is already a little hunter, seeking mysterious procedures through which game can be and ought to be put at his mercy without danger to himself.

881 Around the age of seven, he is thinking about the crucial
794 act of his life, the soli, one of whose rites is that of circumcision.

Observance of the soli, complete with public circumcision and preceded and followed by membership in a brotherhood, is not absolutely indispensable. When, by reason of circumstances, a child lives in an isolated situation, he undergoes the soli within the family circle, without fuss, and this in no way lessens the validity of the act.

881 There is no doubt, however, that nothing but absolute
794 necessity will make a Bambara do this; he loathes such wretched
561 economy, which in any case seems inappropriate to such an im-
571 portant occasion (1). On the contrary, he loves to take part in

1. Besides, since no exact age limit is

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imposed and since there may be as much as six or seven years' difference in age between the oldest and youngest children participating in the same soli, it is obviously possible for a candidate to arrange to be included at some point within this range of ages so as not to be an isolated case.

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a noisy demonstration and to share in all of the rejoicing the brotherhoods provide for their members. This is by no means the least of the reasons for the spread of these brotherhoods, to which the n-Tomo (2) is really the front door, since no one is

2. n-Tomo is the term used in the Ségou area; in Kaarta the term n-Tori is used.

admitted to a brotherhood unless he is soli-ma, and the specific final object of the n-Tomo is the soli.

n-Tomo

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The n-Tomo is an association which, in preparation for the soli, bands together boys (3) of about seven to fourteen years

3. Little girls have no organized society to prepare them for the soli, but they have agreements among themselves and, in addition, are chosen as n-golo-moso-u by the n-Tomo-den'-u.

Each [236] n-Tomo normally includes all the boys due to be circumcised, without distinction by race or rank. Each member is called n-Tomo-den'; the eldest is the leader or n-Tomo-tigi, and he is assisted by a syere or "follower." New members are received every year at the time of the annual festival, and they must pay an entrance fee (a chicken) and a few cowries

561 and take an oath of secrecy. The boy leaves the n-Tomo
857 after the soli. Girls are not admitted.

881 The n-Tomo-tigi and his syere organize the association so as to assure it some property which in principle is collective property. Through common abuse, however, they are the primary if not the sole beneficiaries of it. They persuade their comrades to cultivate a field whose produce will provide the food for their club feasts. The entrance fee is augmented by force, spontaneously or at the order of the n-Tomo-tigi: gifts, collections, theft, hunting, fishing, etc.; in short, anything may be collected by individual or collective effort to form a kind of common treasury.

857 There is no collectivity, however, without its spiritual
793 patron. The n-Tomo meets out-of-doors, at the foot of a tree (1) believed to be the chosen home of a genie-protector.

1. The name "n-Tomo" comes from this. It has been thought that the term was simply the name of the tree where the genie-protector lives and that it was the tree which the Bambara call "n-Tomo." If this were true, why should people in Kaarta use the term "n-Tori" when the tree called n-Tomo does not change its name? It has been suggested that n-Tori is another word meaning "toad" and came from the peculiar "cry" characteristic of the society.

It is my belief that the two terms, "n-Tomo" and "n-Tori" designate the same grouping in different regions and have one and the same meaning: meeting, assembly.

The n-Tomo-tigi is the high priest of this genie; as such he receives the oaths of the neophytes and has a certain degree of authority over the whole band, which enables him to punish any misdeed committed by a n-Tomo-den'. He does not hesitate to use corporal punishment.

857 use corporal punishment.

From this early age, therefore, a Bambara is subject to the corporate discipline which will henceforth dominate his whole life, for the same sort of discipline prevails in the adult brotherhoods.

857 292 [782] The genie-protector is honored by offerings, [237] sacrifices, and ritual dances. When they perform these dances, the n-Tomo-den' take turns wearing the ceremonial mask and costume. The mask has the form of a human face surmounted by a number of vertical horns (five to eight of these) and decorated with a few cowries. The costume consists of a dioki (a kind of blouse with wide sleeves) and a pair of long trousers, which completely cover the body. If the costume is yellowish-brown (basa) or white (dye), the association is called "n-Tomo-fin' (black n-Tomo)" or "n-Tomo-dye (white n-Tomo)," respectively. Is this costume supposed to represent the adepts' conception of their protector's appearance? No. As in all sects, it is intended to differentiate the officiant from the profane world (1).

[536] 1. Some of these associations give a kind of public performance from which they derive profit. Notably, they exhibit a kind of puppet called peremperen' (dancers) which members of the n-Tomo manipulate in a more or less comical manner; often one of the puppets represents a man and the other a woman, and [831] their movements abound in the obscenities which are so popular with the onlookers.

831 857 [534] A wooden phallus (or a small board) is commonly used to summon the n-Tomo-den' to meetings. This is tied to the end of a rope and whirled like a sling, producing a noise which the operator can vary and which carries a considerable distance. This apparatus is called n-Tomo-ulu, translated as "dog of the [195] n-Tomo." It should be noted that the words used in the brotherhoods usually have a double meaning, with a special sense under a vulgar form. For instance, the word ulu means both

857 "dog" and "the sexual parts of a man," and it seems evident
831 that the expression n-Tomo-ulu should be taken in the latter
195 sense. This is all the more likely since in the similar organization among the Khassonké the same apparatus is called khe-fengo, literally, "thing of a man," that is, "sexual parts of a man."

857 The great festival of the association takes place every
796 year after the harvest and does not differ essentially from the one celebrated at the same time by all the brotherhoods. It involves offerings and sacrifices to the genie-protector, communion by the n-Tomo-den' at a corporate banquet, and the admission of new members. The following is a detailed description. [238]

At the instigation of the n-Tomo-tigi, the brotherhood's field has been harvested and to the grain collected has been added whatever the boys could obtain from their families or friends by any means, even theft. From this millet the n-Tomo-
[273] tigi has had dlo (beer) prepared, which is drunk in great quantities on such occasions. The "elders" (koro-u), relatives, and friends can be counted on to send their contributions in kind.

Each n-Tomo-den' is given a little outfit appropriate to the occasion. The ceremonial costume is put in order; the dloki and trousers are washed and ironed, if need be, and the mask is rubbed with vegetable butter (si tlu) to give it gloss.

On the day set, everything is in readiness. Many gourds of dege (1) and to (2), numerous jars of beer (dlo), and also

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1. Dege is made by putting coarsely ground millet into a small quantity of water.

2. A native mush.

some kola nuts have been assembled, along with sacrificial victims.

857 The n-Tomo-den', each leading a chicken on a string,
796 go to the meeting place in single file, with the n-Tomo-tigi
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857 and his syere at the head. There, the n-Tomo-den' squat at
796 a little distance from the n-Tomo-tigi, who takes his place in
782 front of them, facing the tree where the guardian genie dwells, in order to perform the libations and sacrifices. First he takes a small gourd and pours the dege it contains against the trunk of the tree; he cuts the throat of a chicken and dribbles its blood on the tree in the same way; next, in a jet of saliva, he spits on it the juice and particles of kola nuts which he has chewed for the purpose; finally, he fastens a few of the chicken's feathers in the smear of blood. As he makes each of these offerings, he says to the genie: "Look here, I offer you this chicken, protect us, defend us against the wicked and against evil genii. Give us enough to live well. Save us from illness. Give us rain to make our fields fruitful and be propitious to our families."

He speaks thus for everybody, after which each one comes in turn to offer his sacrifice and to make personal requests through him as intermediary.

857 The admission of new members follows. Each of them
796 pays his entrance fee and then, prostrate before the genie, swears never to reveal anything to the uninitiated, [239] above all to the women." If you betray your brothers," says the n-Tomo-tigi, "may the genie kill you!" The new member repeats: "May he kill me!"

[535] At this point the victims are cooked, and while they are being prepared, the n-Tomo-den' dance in turn, dressed in the ceremonial regalia. Their steps are accompanied by the beating of drums, and they twirl a flexible stick as they dance. When the victims are cooked, the banquet begins. Everyone eats and drinks as much as he can; a special treat of kola nuts brings the banquet to a close.

857 On this day each n-Tomo-den' is expected to take one of
796 his gifts or some other personal possession and make a present of
572 it to his n-golo-moso (1). This is how one names the young
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1. N-golo-moso, literally, "woman of the birth," is the companion associated with the rite which he is to undergo.

857 796 [672] companion whom each n-Tomo-den' is required to choose upon his admission into the sect; she is his special girl friend and his relations with her are not merely platonic.

857 796 785 The meal is over by mid-afternoon, and the band returns to the village for a public performance during which the members beat one another. First, the n-Tomo-tigi and his syere advance to the middle of a circle of onlookers, relatives, friends, and others; the mothers wrap cloths or scarves around their hips and stomachs to protect them from serious injury. Onlookers sing and clap their hands. The n-Tomo-tigi holds his whip aloft with his arms outstretched, and the syere immediately flogs his head and shoulders, front and back, his thighs, legs, and feet; he keeps this up, the victim uttering not a single cry of pain, until he can strike no longer, either because he is exhausted or because his whip is broken.

Then it is the turn of the syere to be flogged in the same way. Following this, the n-Tomo-den' in pairs flog each other until it is the turn of the very youngest who, being less hardened, weep and scream and run away at the first blow. This naturally gives rise to laughter and mockery among the onlookers, who had greatly admired the stamina of the others.

In some places each n-Tomo-den' flagellates himself.

What is the meaning of this practice? It seems likely that originally its purpose was to emphasize the secrecy required of the n-Tomo-den' by giving them a chance to show that they would not violate [240] their oaths even under blows. It should be recalled that flogging was the common method of obtaining confessions, always considered the best proof of guilt. Thus, the practice of flagellation would to some extent enable the adepts not to confess under blows (1). The practice is also a means of preparing the boys to undergo circumcision without flinching, since it is a signal disgrace to show or expose pain at that time.

1. Flagellation is also practiced in certain brotherhoods for no apparent reason except that of hardening one against pain. See "The Koré" below.

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Soli (2)

2. The word soli is used in Kaarta; at Ségou the term is boloko or ngolo-ko, literally, "affair of birth."

The single word soli is used for what we call circumcision and excision. This is because a Bambara has in mind not this or that surgical operation, accessory in nature, but rather the ceremony which for boys and girls alike marks the passage or, more accurately in line with the etymology of the word soli, the fact of being born to a new status.

881 The soli does not take place every year, because it involves considerable expense for the families, which they cannot always meet. At the instigation of the boys who must undergo the soli and who, therefore are called soli-ma-u (people of the soli), the family heads assemble at the call of the nyaaa-n-son-na-ba to decide whether or not the soli will be held. If the decision is affirmative, the boys and girls then take steps to make sure that the festival (nyara, "orgy, wedding") will be as elaborate as possible. In principle, the date coincides with the third day of the festival of the sheep.

Guided by their elders, the young girls (soli-ma-mɔgɔ-u) go from door to door to solicit millet for the banquet (3) which

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3. The menu includes couscous (basi), and it is called soli-kili-basi, "basi of the solicitation for the soli," on account of the source of the millet used to prepare it, solicited by the children.

they are expected to give the elders (koro-u) on the second day of the feast of the sheep. The period of the ceremonies of the soli actually begins with this meal. [241]

In the afternoon of this day, the boys make the customary sacrifice to their genie-protector, dancing in his honor in ceremonial costume but without flagellation.

881 302 On the same day the young girls in certain localities have a characteristic ceremony. One of them whitens her face, breast, and back with a mixture of milk and ashes. Thus daubed, she dashes out of the village brandishing the spatula (to-n-galama) which is used to stir mush (to) in the pot; her companions follow her, shouting. The band goes around the village four times in this fashion, each time stopping at the crossroads. At these points the girl who is bedaubed throws handfuls of food (1), provided by her companions, to the spirits, crying: "Dege dule (2)." Her companions reply: "Naloma (3)."

[262]

1. Usually basi (couscous) made with fish.

2. Literally, "thick mush."

3. That is, "fool."

881 527 [273] [57] [301] [482] [373] The eve of the soli (soli-si). During the evening preceding the soli, the families concerned enjoy an ample meal, accompanied by innumerable jugs of beer (dlo) as is the custom at all festivals among the Bambara. This is a time of special merriment, of shining faces and greasy hands, and it is good form for the men and boys to belch noisily, saying repeatedly: "ne ne fa," literally, "I am full," that is, "I am replete." The women wander about the lanes, wrapped in their best skirts, with balls of amber in their hair and small silver or even gold rings in their ears and nostrils and rather heavy bracelets on their arms and ankles. Some carry jars of dlo on their heads, while others carry gourds full of couscous, dege, or hot sauces which are often nauseous with smoked or spoiled fish. After the meal everyone gathers on the public square, forming a wide circle whose center is reserved for the dancers; piles of dried millet stalks are used to make bright fires which illuminate the scene and warm the audience.

881 302 The "boys of the soli" (soli-ma-tye-u), their heads

881 freshly shaved (4), their bodies rubbed with vegetable butter
[302]

4. Just as their heads were shaved at birth.

(si tlu). [242] arrive in single file. Greeted by the onlookers, they take their places in the front row. Shouts, noisy conversation, and songs are intermingled and make a racket which is interrupted by the arrival of the "girls of the soli" (soli-ma-moso-u). With their hair in a tangle and dressed in short skirts (1)

1. Blue for Moslems and yellowish-brown (basa) for the purely pagan Bambara.

reaching from the navel to the knee, they enter one behind the other, walk around the assemblage, and finally take their places in a group near their mothers and friends.

The assembled men drink around the fires.

881 All the drums are there, and as soon as the girls appear,
533 the drummers rush to their instruments. There are big drums
534 resting on three legs (denu-ba), others which hang from the shoulder, and still others carried under the arm. Young women shake bits of iron (kinge) as one shakes castanets, and there are other iron instruments provided with rings. Old women pound on gourds turned upside down in pots filled with water.

The noise is deafening, and it is dominated by songs in honor of the ancestors shouted by the whole assemblage as loudly as possible. Then the whole crowd, where the tipsy are in the majority and where everyone is at the highest possible pitch of excitement, starts a frenzied dance accompanied by songs usually improvised.

881 While all this is going on, the adepts of the major
781 brotherhood (2) are outside the village, noisily driving out the

2. The Komo around Ségou; the Nama in the Kaarta area.

881 evil genii in order to preserve the "people of the soli" (soli-ma-u)
787 from their bewitchments.

881 The soli. The soli, this make-believe birth, is marked
304 by a bloody operation, circumcision for the boys and excision for the girls. The fact that the ceremony does not get its name from this operation demonstrates that it is merely show; it is merely a rite of separation between the previous state and the new one (3). The operation takes place at dawn.

[171]

3. That is why among other peoples the operation does not exist or represented by a mere slash on the thigh (among the Koniagui).

Boys. The blacksmith who is to circumcise the boys waits outside the village under a tree. Assisted by members [243] of the sects and especially by the Komo-tigi, he performs the operation behind a loincloth hung up as a screen. The boy stands erect, and the blacksmith draws out the prepuce and cuts it off, after having determined approximately the proper place to cut. The patient is expected to show no weakness; on the contrary, he exerts himself to say a few words to show his courage.

As soon as the operation is finished, a gunshot announces the news to the elders crouched about the village fires, and a female griot proclaims it to the bystanders. The Komo-tigi takes a few nyanka leaves, burns them, and goes to place the ashes on the boy's familial kara. The boy runs off to rejoin his companions under the tree especially chosen for this reassembly. All the boys will spend their days there, on the fringe of society with which they are forbidden to mingle. They return to the village only at night, to sleep in a hut reserved for them.

881 A man reputed to know how to care for circumcised
304 boys lives with them, takes care of them, and closely supervises them; this is the sema-tye. Every day abundant food is brought
292 to him for his patients. The latter wear a dioki (blouse) and kursi (trousers) made of cotton cloth, blue or yellow-brown (basa) depending on their affiliations (1), and their headgear is usually

1. The basa color is much in demand

881 304 292 among the Bambara, while the Marka use cloth dyed indigo-blue.

a high cap with strings extending from the earlaps. They can only leave the place where they are assembled, even for the needs of nature, under the leadership of the sema-tye and shaking a stick of wood to which are attached bits of broken pottery. This rattle is called n-koso-m-bara.

881 304 They pass the time plaiting mats, gossiping, laughing, and pestering passers-by. On market days they are permitted to block the paths leading to the village and to collect a tithe from the traders.

The officials of the sects often visit them in their retreat.

Girls. The blacksmiths' wives who are to remove part of the clitoris await the girls outside the village under the trees. Some matrons assist them. Each child in turn runs up to the operator and squeezes herself between [244] the legs of the matron who exposes the clitoris. The excised clitoris is laid [789] in a little woven basket and is carefully preserved for making talismans.

The completion of the operation is announced in the same way as for the boys, and the Komo-tigi likewise puts the ashes from nyanka leaves on the familial kara.

The girl then rejoins her companions in the hut reserved for them in each section of the settlement. There they are under the surveillance of an old woman, the sema-moso, who knows how to take care of them and who sees to it that they behave properly. They are very well fed.

881 Wrapped in skirts, they lean on canes of dried millet stalks when they walk and shake a gourd pierced with holes and [514] filled with pebbles. They go out only for the needs of nature and then all in a body. They warn the passers-by by shaking their rattles and singing improvised songs. As they near paths outside the village, they intone a refrain.

Soli da wano (1). The seclusion of the soli-ma ceases

1. Literally, "sixth day of the soli."

881 on the sixth day. Just as a baby is admitted to the family on the seventh day after its birth, so on the sixth day after the surgical operation which has, as it were, marked the end of childhood, one attains a new status.

881 The sixth day, da woro, is the most important festival of the soli. All the relatives and friends are invited and even 786 the most distant make great efforts to be present. Each one sends or brings his contribution to the orgy-like meals which go on and on, that day and the days following. The fiancés of the girls must be represented and send gifts. Married brothers and sisters must come, bringing their respective wives and husbands. It is an occasion for feasting and drinking, and it goes on as long as the provisions last, i.e., for several days.

881 The essential part of the ceremony, for which everyone has come, takes place on the evening of the sixth day. The onlookers gather in the public square where there will be [245] dancing, but usually only the women and girls remain there; the men and boys go outside for the admittance of the soli-ma-tye to the leading brotherhood of the village (Komoya, Namaya) (1).

1. We shall describe this admittance when we discuss the brotherhoods.

Sometimes, however, there is no separation of the sexes, either because there is no active brotherhood or because the high priest has set a later date for the admittance ceremony.

In any case, the performance within the village is particularly for the girls, soli-ma-moso. Wrapped in a cotton coverlet with blue and white stripes, called dampe, each girl lies between her mother's legs (2) on a white cloth laid upon a

2. Or those of a relative or friend of her mother.

mat.

[534] While the boys, soli-ma-tye, are noisily shaking their rattles, n-koso-m-bara, the girls, soli-ma-moso, flourish their pebble-filled gourds.

881
535 In a compact group, the women and girls of all ages and stations shuffle slowly around the orchestra, while the men drink and sing around small fires of dry millet stalks.

From time to time, upon being invited to do so, one of the girls, soli-ma-moso, gets up, rattles her gourd, and joins the dance with slow, deliberate steps.

At dawn, when they are about to return to their huts, the girls, soli-ma-moso, make one last circuit, and then each one, with her heels together and her hands crossed above her head, makes three leaps into the air. She does this three times.

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201 The Bambara themselves interpret these various details concerning girls, the soli-ma-moso, as symbolic. The girl's position between her mother's legs recalls physical birth. The white cloth represents the one that at her mother's marriage bore witness to virginity and reminds the girl that she will have to give similar proof to her husband. The dance done with slow, measured steps is the symbol of a child learning to walk, and the nine leaps that close the ceremony attest to the fact that the girl is now an adult. A final rite shows the parallelism between the soli and [246] birth: on the sixth day, the nyana-n-
[302] son-na-ba shaves the head of the soli-ma-moso (1).

1. In place of the braided coiffure, young girls wear the magic cord with nine knots, called tafo, on the crown of the head, and this is connected to a similar one, called dyo, at the nape of the neck.

881 End of the soli. On the seventh day, before noon, all the soli-ma-moso go to the well or to the river to wash the soiled clothes and to scour the pots and gourds used for the festival. Then all return to the discipline of the soli: the boys under their tree, and the girls in their huts. The sema watch over the youngsters, who by now are bored with the discipline. About three weeks must pass after the operation before all the soli-ma completely recover.

881 At the end of this time, the nyana-n-son-na-ba and his council having come to an agreement with the sema to end the period of seclusion, each leader performs certain magic passes, under the boys' tree and near the girls' huts, to dispel any evil. The Bambara are convinced that so long as the period of convalescence is not officially closed the circumcised boys or excised girls are as much a danger to society as society is to them; that is why they must spend this period in seclusion. Furthermore, anything used by them during their seclusion is impregnated with this evil and may spread it.

881 783

Therefore, as soon as the interdict is lifted, everything is collected to be burned at sunset (2). Near the trees outside the village the mats, the n-koso-m-bara, the gourds, millet stalks, rags, etc., are all piled up, and the nyana-n-son-na-ba sets them afire. The boys and girls jump over the fire three times; they are then free to return to the village. They run home promptly to adorn themselves for the festival celebrating their return.

[789]

2. However, personal effects (the boys' kursi, dloki, and baufla, and the girls' tafe) are not burned; along with their stains, these are impregnated with virtues which make them particularly valuable for talismans, amulets, and other magic weapons.

881 Once more there are lavish meals and interminable drinking bouts, followed by a general gathering in the public square. People come from all directions, among them appallingly decrepit old women who try to manage everything. [247]

[291] On this occasion, the boys, soli-ma-tye, appear for the first time in true man's attire, full trousers, cap with earlaps, and an ample new shirt. With lance in hand, they swagger about and simulate the behavior of warriors; they are now tye-kura, "new men."

881 301 The girls also are decked out to excess in women's attire. Wearing several skirts and adorned with all the jewelry relatives

881 and friends have kindly lent for the occasion, they advance
301 shyly. In some areas, notably in the Banî region, they wear bundles of cowries, from the bride price already paid for them, around the hips and hanging on each side of the head (1).

[302 171]

1. Bambara girls who have gone through the soli have their heads shaved. Among other peoples, on the contrary, girls have their hair braided like women for the first time, but to the braid is added a tuft of the hair shaved off seven days after birth; this hair has usually been lost, but a small tuft is made to simulate it.

881 Boys and girls, following the old women who lead them,
[535] dance around the orchestra, and then all sit down in a circle. The nyana-n-son-na-ba takes the floor. He speaks in a low voice, and, as is proper, his words are repeated in a loud voice by a herald. He proclaims the end of the soli, recalls its principal events, and indicates clearly which children have participated in the rite; each boy and girl is specifically named. He will also be sure to point out that the soli is an immemorial cus-
[578] tom among the Bambara and that there is no worse insult than to treat a Bambara as uncircumcised. He closes by inviting everyone to eat, drink, and celebrate in the joy and harmony appropriate to such a festival.

[535] Dancing is resumed, and the boys and girls of the soli take part. The festivities continue as long as the refreshments last, usually several days.

To end it all, no one leaves without giving at least a few kola nuts to the heroes of the festival, the boys and girls.

The last phase is the thanks given by the soli-ma to those who assisted at the da-woro. In noisy bands, boys and girls dash about the village in two distinct groups. The girls' group is headed by the soma-moso who is called masa (queen), followed by the masa-ma-kono (vice-queen) and the masa-ma-kono-segere [248] (follower of the vice-queen); the last girl in the

881 group is called kule. In the same way, the boys go about in a group headed by the sema-tye, called masa (king), followed by the masa-ma-kono, the masa-ma-kono-segere, etc.

In this way, the whole country learns which boys and girls have completed the soli.

The Fla-n-ton'

561 572 575 Those who have belonged to the same n-Tomo-ya and have gone through the soli together remain bound together for life; they are fula-ni ("peers," "twins") because they were born on the same day to sexual and social life. Wherever they may be and whatever their respective rank, two fula-ni consider themselves equals even if one of them is a chief and the other a slave; the latter in particular has the right to speak his mind without fear (1). Theoretically, therefore, the fula-ni is the friend on

1. See in Chapter 7, "The Man with Three Braids." [Not translated.]

whom one may safely rely, and he is usually a member of the council, small but very powerful, which every fa likes to have around. It is to him that the fa confides his troubles, his joys, his plans, and his personal affairs. He is present at all the celebrations and mourning of the family. On serious or important occasions, he represents his friend who often entrusts him with the supervision of his household during an absence and appoints him guardian or trustee of his children after his death. He is a brother who may be loved more than agnate or uterine brothers. At the same time the fulani-ya does not necessarily produce a type of brotherhood analogous to that brought about by the blood pact. Rather, it engenders a kind of mutual assistance which is strengthened by the organization called fla-n-ton', "assemblage of people of the same age," i.e., those "born" at the same soli.

The young people from the same soli form a fla-m-bolo, literally, a band of persons of the same age.

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575 A fla-n-ton' usually includes the young people from three consecutive soli, so it is an assemblage of three fla-m-bolo. Thus, Bambara society is composed of a certain number of fla-n-ton', and all the people are distributed among them, from the most recent tye-kura (new men) to the tye-koro (elders) who are the most advanced in age. [249] Since the women also have their fla-n-ton', it is reasonable to say, from a certain point of view, that the soli is the basis of life and of the social organization.

[571] Each fla-n-ton' is independent, but it maintains the best of relations with its immediate neighbors, the one preceding it, the one following it, and the one of the women of the same soli. Thus, the fla-n-ton' have a certain solidarity among them, which is shown by the custom of each fla-n-ton' honoring its immediate neighbors by offering them some of the food from its corporate meals. It should be noted, also, that whenever discord arises within a fla-n-ton', the neighboring fla-n-ton' intervene to make peace; a special arbiter may even be chosen to smooth out the difficulties involved in such an affair (1).

1. In this connection, note the difficulties between the ton' of Kassoum and Biton as reported in the chronicle of Ségou above.

Wherever he goes, a Bambara will look up people of his own age, i.e., those who went through the soli at the same time. He can always count on their friendly welcome and practical help.

In each fla-n-ton' there is a chief, ton-tigi, chosen in various ways depending on the place and the people. He may be the son of a notable; he may be a house slave. A syere (follower) assists him or replaces him. A dyala-tige, or assigner of shares, has the function of enforcing discipline and distributing the food at the group banquets; this is usually a house slave. Finally, a ton-dyeli serves as general factotum and herald; a person of caste has this role. From the point of view of the

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575 association, each fula-ni is a ton'-den'.

The bachelors and some of the married men regard the fla-n-ton' simply as a means of having a good time in the company of boon companions. Anything brought by an individual member goes to swell the common fund which is most often used to organize feasts and drinking bouts. At these banquets, it is customary to comply with rules which appear curious at first sight and which must be obeyed unless the member wants to pay a fine into the common fund. Thus, anyone who acts on his own prior to or contrary to an order from the ton-tigi, anyone who comes or leaves, blows his nose, [250] spits, sneezes, and so on, without permission, is fined. Aside from the profit to the common fund, the procedure has its uses in making the ton-den' amenable to discipline.

In principle, the treasury of the fla-n-ton' is supposed to be used only to succor poor, embarrassed, or unfortunate members, who are expected to repay with interest insofar as they are able to do so. In theory, also, all of the ton-den' can count on moral and material aid from their fla-ni whenever there is need for it. It goes without saying that this fine spirit of altruism is rarely put into practice.

The fact of the matter is that the young masters (kamale-u) make use of the organization to resist the omnipotence of the elders (koro-u); malcontents of all sorts take refuge in it; adventurers find it useful in promoting their schemes. We shall see how the two most powerful Bambara empires were built on the fla-n-ton'.

2. General Considerations Concerning the Brotherhoods

Origin of the Brotherhoods

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794 There is no reason to suppose that the Bambara brotherhoods are not purely native institutions; similar organizations are to be found all over Africa, particularly in areas untouched by Moslem influence. All of them follow similar principles made manifest in ways characteristic of African occultism.

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794 There is no doubt, however, that in the case of the Bambara with whom we are here concerned this native foundation

177 has acquired various elements brought in from the outside world
794 by Berbers, Arabs, and others, or by Sudanese pilgrims returning from the Orient. In any event, this foreign occultism -- usually oriental -- certainly did not give rise to or greatly modify the local Sudanese occultism; it merely strengthened its organization, its institutions, and its methods by adding new knowledge.

The legend (1) which claims that the nyana of the boli

1. Reported below in the chapter on Islam.

are a Moslem importation does not mean that these "gods" were introduced [251] actually and exclusively by such means. It means only that pre-existing native institutions have received foreign support from pilgrims or others returning or arriving from the Orient.

Dogma

794 Are these brotherhoods based on a more or less secret teaching of cardinal truths? It does not seem to me to be risky to say that they are not. Everything in these cults may be summed up as empirical practices which are believed to have the effect of forcing a "god" (that is, an extranatural force) to serve man. The aim is essentially utilitarian and worldly: to acquire a "powerful protector" (dyigi same) for defence, for offence, and especially for the purpose of attaining sufficient power for the realization of all desires.

Such an alliance with a god by means of a cult compels one to behave in certain ways, but discipline of this type does not lead to the improvement of either the individual or the society through the acquisition of what we call moral qualities or virtues. It is all the more obvious, then, that the brotherhoods are not trying to assure their members entry into a supernatural world; they can barely claim to assure them protection and a modicum of material well-being. A spiritual mysticism is unknown to them (1).

1. However, see Chapter 7. [Not translated.]

Methods

794 789 Are the rites and magical practices used in the brotherhoods efficacious?

Here, as in all matters, the Blacks operate by feeling their way, imitation, or adaptation, all incomplete. Just as an ignorant man is perfectly capable of accidentally starting a clockworks whose mechanism he does not understand and so can either start or stop it, put it out of order, or break it, so a Black can sometimes, by a kind of empiricism, get results similar to those of the magnetizers, hypnotists, magicians, and alchemists of all times and places.

Without plan or method, the Sudanese magicians and sorcerers [252] have nevertheless not worked in vain. In the process of arousing the native's emotional temperament and keeping it ever aroused, they have created an atmosphere favorable to the rise and propagation of psychic phenomena. Any type of spirituality would benefit from this age-old process by which the Sudanese soul is all the better prepared to broaden its mystical tendencies toward the cult of the manes which the magicians have carefully kept within the material domain of immediate utility.

We have never heard of a single magician who, when he seeks to penetrate the invisible, has sought to understand its arrangement so as to regulate his own life with a view to attaining a privileged position in that world invisible to us. Each of them is merely trying to obtain a fragment of the universal energy in order to realize his worldly designs. Still, this continual striving toward the supernatural has often strengthened the feeling toward the manes through the spirituality that has been aroused. Thus, as magic loses its power, man's desire for the supernatural, lacking a goal, augments the cult of the manes until it goes on to something higher. Thus a new spirituality is created on the native plane, which is easily oriented toward revealed religions when they know how to receive it.

Nyana

794 776 Each brotherhood is founded on the cult of a spirit (nyana). What we call "spirit" to indicate its immateriality, the Bambara from another point of view calls "power," "master," "lord", etc., for such is the meaning of the words nya, nyana, nama, dyara, komo, faro, etc., by which he designates the innumerable "gods" of his pantheon, thus affirming his subjection to this invisible restraint upon him.

It is the magician who creates the nyana of the boli worshiped by the brotherhoods with which we are here concerned. His incantations call up a kind of echo from the invisible; his persistent and peremptory practices produce a sort of personification of his desire in the depths of the universal and diffuse energy, because he "names" the thing he wants. The nyana thus created, which he attracted by "naming" it, is retained by offerings and sacrifices, just as a person is seduced by presents. Finally, he forges a link with the nyana through communion. From that point on creature and creator are [253] so closely bound to each other that neither can refuse anything to the other; they form a single being whose visible aspect is completed by the invisible.

Judging from statements, concepts, and practices, this is the native belief as to the mysterious work of the magician. The latter creates as many nyana as he likes, and he draws at will on the invisible which he fashions and rules.

Boli

794 778 Mankind in general and the native in particular need to give material support to their speculations. The magician and the believer alike need to have at hand the nyana, this essence which is personified by being "named." Appropriate procedures make the nyana come to that altar which at the same time is its symbol and which the Bambara call boli (1).

1. Otherwise known as buri. It should be noted that in ordinary language the

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terms nyana and boli are used interchangeably. This is natural enough since the latter is merely the symbol of the former.

Each nyana has a boli which in form and substance is peculiar to it. Anything may be used to make boli: horn or hair of the hare, hind, or cattle; nails or claws; animal venom or excretions. It is not unusual to find parts of a human body put to use. As the chronicle tells, the war drums of the ton-dyon' were elevated to the rank of boli and were then adorned [727 752] with the craniums and jaws of human beings sacrificed to them. Often the ball tied to the end of a piece of rope or leather and used to beat the tabala [Tr., big drum] is a human hand which has been severed and wrapped in a leather cover.

Certain of the boli, particularly those of the Komo and the Kono, are said to be made of a child's torso; those of the Tyi-wara and Nama are made of wood, and those of the Duga of horn.

All sorts of shapes are employed: men, animals, doll-like figures, balls, small crowns, etc. The principal boli, called boli-de-n-fa, is accompanied by subsidiary ones called boli-de.

The boli is also given sex: one is male, another female; and it is said that there is a kind of mystical copulation [254] from which at the time of initiation are born the spiritual sons of the nyana.

Among boli should be noted those made of forked sticks, such as the n-Golo and the Tyi-wara, both patrons of brotherhoods of young men (1).

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1. If one makes certain comparisons, the forked stick seems to deserve special attention. Among the Khassonké, for instance, the soli-ma always build their seclusion hut (bire) with a forked post in the center. This post, called biri-makho (master of the hut), is a tree trunk chosen

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and cut by the gankurango (magician-protector of the soli-ma among the Khassonké) because it is so placed in the forest that the normal progress of the sun follows the axis formed by the two branches of the fork. There is thus some relation between the sun and the forked tree called biri-makho. Perhaps the same relationship accounts for the sleeping position of the boys in the bire: they always lie with their heads toward the center post and their bodies forming the spokes of a wheel around it. During the soli ceremonies the same Khassonké soli-ma use a short wand forked at one end.

The forked stick with mystical significance is also found among the Koniagui.

It is not possible, given the present state of our knowledge, to be specific about the origin or significance of this symbol. For the same reason, we cannot say whether it can be related to the lyre-shaped stones found in the mysterious collection of rocks discovered in Gambia, in which there is thought to be discernible a clearly defined cult of the sun (cf. Bulletin du Comité d'études historiques et scientifiques de l'A.O.F., 1920, No. 1).

777 778 To the European these boli are thoroughly repulsive objects. Since magic utilizes everything (2), all kinds of things

2. And particularly things which are considered repulsive in ordinary life.

are used to make them, and during the sacrifices, blood, hair, feathers, viscera, etc., are usually placed on the boli. The result is usually a repugnant sight. The native, however, seems to pay no attention to this repulsive aspect which so horrifies

794 Europeans. The Black sees only the symbolic altar which he
778 venerates. Besides, in theory at least, the boli does not acquire its prestige in the eyes of the Black from its strange or bizarre nature; the fact that it is consecrated confers upon it its sacred character and its ritual use. That is why, in general (3), the

> 3. I say "in general" because there are exceptions. The skull of a chief named Sama, who ruled over a village called Gniningo in the Gangaran area, was the boli of a cult created by that chief. When the skull was destroyed, that put an end to the cult, since it was impossible to replace this unique object.

destruction of a boli no more means the destruction of [255] the corresponding cult than destroying a statue of Buddha would mean the annihilation of Buddhism.

The making and consecration of a boli are matters not easily accessible to the profane. Here is what Raffenel's informant, Bouo, told him about a boli belonging to the Massa-si: "The sorcerers first sought a very rare tree. They approached it in a procession, dug a hole at its foot, and after invocations in an unknown tongue gathered parts of its roots with bizarre ceremonies. Using the same invocations and ceremonies, they procured some hairs from the tail of a black horse. So that these ingredients should answer their purpose, they had one of their number take off his trousers and shirt and then pick up the objects (1). The bark and the horsehair were placed in an earthen

> 1. It is common for a sorcerer to remove all his clothing for the performance of his duties.

vessel and remained there for half a day over a hot fire. During this last day the proxy of the magicians prostrated himself, face to the ground, seven times seven times, while reciting prayers in a language which no one could understand.

794 778 "After the creation came the consecration. The Kouroubari and the leaders of the people witnessed it. A white ox, a red ox, and a red rooster were sacrificed for the occasion (2)."

2. Raffenel, Nouveau voyage au Pays des Nègres [New Journey to the Country of the Negroes], Vol. 1, p. 237.

The boli is usually hidden from the uninitiated; it is put in a sack or other receptacle, and except during ceremonies it [346] is stored with other cult objects in a kind of temple often resembling a miniature native hut and called nyana-bon', "hut of the nyana."

[776] Obviously there are differences between the various nyana, because peculiar practices call up unlike spirits. In any event, however, the captive spirit is, as it were, a slave of the magician, who treats it as such and even sells it, along with instructions for its use. There are magicians who go from place to place, making and selling nyana and other magic weapons, and there are recognized markets where one can always [256] obtain [443] the boli of the most popular nyana. The markets at Bélédougou, Bendougou, and Follona are especially well known.

Trade in Boli

794 778 438 The chronicle of Ségou tells that Biton, the founder of the empire, acquired his principal idols in the Bendougou region where the popular markets of Moribala, Kourbadougou, and Diali are located.

Itinerant merchants deal in all sorts of cult objects, and there are settled traders who are sometimes very well known, like a certain Minkoli who made boli and was so famous that his village is named after him: Minkoli ka dugu (village of Minkoli). I have never been able to find out, however, which village in the Bendougou area was the home of the famous Minkoli.

By such means the cult of a given nyana, once it has been created, spreads to some extent, depending on the degree

794 to which its creator chooses to reveal the ritual of initiation.
778 The head of a family, just like an isolated individual
438 or the head of a large community, will not fail to acquire, for a monetary consideration, exclusive possession of one of these powerful boli, which becomes his personal protector. Sounsan, the ancestor of the Massa-si, had with him the nyana n-Ka; Biton, the founder of the empire of Ségou, possessed several famous nyana: na n-Golo-ko (1), Nye-n-dinge du (2), and ba Kung-o-

[776]

1. Literally, na-n-Goloko, "the mother concerned with birth" or, freely translated, "the goddess who presides at birth."

2. Nye dinge du, "the deep orbit of the eye."

ba (3). Generally speaking, these private cults cannot spread,

3. Ba-kung-o-ba, "mother of the great bush."

but when their possessor becomes a powerful chief, they migrate rapidly. This is what happened to Biton's cults; his followers took up the worship of his idols.

794 When an individual becomes the acknowledged possessor of a nyana the result is an alliance with this nyana, which in the native language is called furu, the same word as that used for the [833] conjugal union of a man and a woman. Indeed, the installation of a renowned nyana in its master's village gives rise to rejoicing [257] similar to that occasioned by a wedding; hence, the following expressions: a ye boli furu, "he is united with a boli"; a ye boh' furu gosi, "he has effected a union with a boli"; a-ta boli konyo kera, "he has celebrated the wedding of his boli." On the day of such festivals, the master of the nyana (nyana-tigi or boli-tigi, surrounded by his acolytes, offers dlo to his guests who have come to greet him and give him presents. At nightfall, when the uninitiated have withdrawn, the clergy and the adepts in a procession take the boli to the "sacred wood" where the first cult ceremony is held, characterized principally by dancing and singing.

778 The cash value of boli varies considerably. At the most
495 it is between 30 and 40 francs, payable in kind or in cowries. The cost is increased, however, by gifts to the seller and his acolytes who come to instruct the new clergy in their functions. As a result, considering the various kinds of refreshments, dogs, goats, and chickens, as well as kola nuts and millet beer (dlo), the price may actually come to 100 francs.

778 Since the nyana-tigi (master of the nyana) has full con-
794 trol over his nyana, he may admit anyone he likes to the benefits of his cult. Well-known cults have been much sought after, and as they developed, they became complicated. As the importance of a cult increases, its ceremonies are amplified and augmented in proportion to the number of people taking part in them. Initiation requires a fee, and a clergy becomes necessary. This is the way that these cults, established through participation, have given rise to associations which the Europeans call "secret societies" but which might better be called "brotherhoods" because of the spiritual filiation uniting the affiliates.

Mysteries and Liturgical Equipment

Everything that concerns the brotherhood of the nyana is shrouded in mystery; for various reasons, everything is concealed (do, as the natives put it). It is, indeed, a principle of magic that power exists only insofar as its essence evades the investigation of its adversaries. The uninitiated therefore, must not know the basis of the supernatural power of the nyana, because, if they knew, they would be able to acquire the means of [258] destroying it, resisting it, or at the very least rendering it inefficacious. Anything related to the nyana is bound to it and is, so to speak, an integral part of the nyana by virtue of consecration: the clergy and the liturgical equipment. That is why both are do and why every effort is made to hide them, in their magical aspect, from curiosity of the profane. By extension, however, all members of a brotherhood of any nyana of the boli in Bambara country are identified as do-u, "the hidden people."

794 [292] Some of the clergy use a disguise when officiating in public; furthermore, the ceremonies are held only at night.

[198] Finally, in the presence of the profane, the initiated use a special language for everything referring specifically to the cult. The greatest secret of all is the name of the nyana, [551] because anyone who knows the name has complete power over the spirit it designates.

794 298 From the point of view of the disguised clerical body, this secrecy is virtually impenetrable. A disguised person loses his human personality and is withdrawn from the natural world. It is an accepted fact that it is dangerous for those not affiliated to intercept his glance through the tiny openings in the mask; undoubtedly his person on that occasion is impregnated with a fluid whose emanations are fatal to those who, not being affiliated, are unprotected against them.

Some of these disguises include a headdress or mask and for the body a kind of costume usually made of long strips of vegetal material; is this, as has been suggested, simply a means of dominating the herd of adepts and even more the profane through the terror such regalia inspires when seen at night by the flickering light of torches and bonfires? It seems more probable that one must put this matter on the plane of the supernatural in order to understand it. Dangerous wild animals [825 772] are believed to be incarnations of evil and powerful gods, and an attempt is made to present an outward appearance consistent with the terror merely seeing them inspires, in order thereby to acquire the supernatural qualities that characterize them (1).

1. There is no doubt that some individuals, under the influence of the role of wild beast that they are portraying, have been led to commit actual murders during ritual observances. I have often heard this asserted in connection with the dyara (lion).

794 782 It should be noted that the costume, gestures, [259] dances, songs, and music of the dye-n-fa and their acolytes

794 are all designed to attract and capture the god and, for this
782 purpose, to transfer the officiant from our world to the supernatural one. I have never heard anyone claim that the costume and the various actions of the officiant were intended to counterfeit the nyana; nor that the boli in any way represented the native's idea of the god.

The Clergy

793 Even though, in theory, familial nyana are inherited, those worshiped by the brotherhoods are usually bought. The head of the brotherhood is called the nyana-tigi (master of the nyana) (1), whether he has inherited the office, been elected

> 1. Ordinarily the word nyana is replaced by the specific name of the nyana, Komo, Nama, Nya, etc.

to it, or has imposed himself by virtue of being the most prominent founder of the brotherhood. It is he who keeps the boli, hence his title of boli-tigi, and who knows all the secrets of the cult. His duty is to direct the cult and to administer the brotherhood, and this gives him considerable local prestige.

The initiates of higher rank are called dye-n-fa-u, "masters of the truth." The nyana-tigi chooses his aides from this group, particularly the person who, "seized by the god" (wara-mina-den), becomes the "oracle" (wara-da). The role
[787 791] of medium requires special persons who can go into a trance under the influence of the animating spirit, and the wara-da has the duty of choosing and training the person who will succeed him or replace him, if the need arises (2).

> 2. These dye-n-fa students are called soma-de (elder sons) in the Komo brotherhood.

All the initiates are to some extent diviners through practices which are peculiar to them, and the brotherhoods often

793 provide instruction in deductive divination, which usually requires two years of study.

This clergy is recruited and formed by co-optation, and it includes, besides the persons already mentioned, the muru-kala-tigi (3) or "sacrificer," who kills the victims, and a dyeli

3. Literally, "he who holds the handle of the knife."

or "herald" of the god.

794 The rank and file of the faithful are called nyana-den u, sons of the nyana (1) [Ed., see footnote 1 above]. In order to be accepted as nyana-den', it is necessary [260] to take an oath and to pay an entrance fee. The terms of the oath used in the brotherhoods reveal that, in sum, the nyana-den' promises secrecy, obedience, and solidarity, as we shall show in what follows. Certain aides of the clergy are selected from among the common run of the faithful, for instance, the da-ro-tigi or da-ro-ta-la, who is a kind of beadle.

The Treasury

The performance of liturgical ceremonies is not the only function of the clergy; it also constitutes a kind of council to administer the property of the brotherhood, for the cult is not gratuitous. First, admission to the brotherhood requires the payment of a fee, and the same is true whenever an individual is nominated or promoted to an office. Furthermore, an important contribution, in proportion to the individual's resources, is required for any important ceremony. Finally, fines are imposed on the faithful and even on outsiders as punishment for wrong doings.

794 Fines assume many forms, whether they are to atone for
681 a wrong committed by one of the faithful against the brotherhood or the god, whether an outsider is to be punished similarly for arousing the wrath of the nyana, or for reasons sometimes known only to the clergy who levies them. The nyana-tigi and

794 his acolytes are exceedingly zealous in discovering wrong-
681 doings and the guilty parties and in requiring material proof of repentance, which they determine and try to multiply since they appropriate the whole profit, albeit abusively. Theoretically, these fines are not very heavy and are paid in kind (fowl, a goat, a dog, some kola nuts, millet, beer), but, when multiplied, they become a heavy burden for the debtor. He cannot evade this method of extortion, because his persecutors, in league against him, use every means, even criminal, to force him to pay.

794 Strictly speaking, all the property belongs to the nyana;
421 it is by rights the common property of the nyana-den' and in
426 principle is not to be privately appropriated nor alienated. It is to be used only for the needs of the cult, for assisting needy members, and in exceptional cases for loans to outsiders at exorbitant interest. For that matter, the nyana-den' who gets a loan from the common fund must repay it [261] as soon as his affairs take a turn for the better and, insofar as possible, add a certain amount in order to show his gratitude. It sometimes happens that an outsider is aided out of the common fund; this is a kind of charity which is both a good advertisement and extremely profitable.

794 The common property is not to be appropriated by any
421 dignitary or member of the brotherhood for his own benefit. Although there is certainly not a single native who is unaware of this regulation (1), it is all too evident that abuses have led

1. Raffenel writes (op. cit., p. 239): "The victims' flesh and other objects become the property of the poor."

to extraordinary perversions. The clergy regularly appropriates the property of the nyana to its own use, and in order to increase the profit, they do not hesitate to commit actual crimes that enable them to exploit the terror they inspire, which they are careful to nurture and to reinforce.

The Operation of the Brotherhood

794 A brotherhood is a spiritual family whose internal affairs are conducted like those of a community with natural filiation. The nyana-tigi has the role of fa, and the assemblage of dye-n-fa-u, reinforced by the initiated and the leading believers, serve as the community council. Thus, questions confined to the cult and to administrative matters are dealt with by the nyana-tigi acting alone or with his council, just like the fa in the community. Therefore, the description of the latter's duties which has been given above will suffice to explain by analogy the practices in the brotherhoods. There are, however, certain details peculiar to the brotherhoods, and these will be set forth in what follows.

The Cult

794 The cult is made public during certain ceremonies, of which the two most important are the one at the time of sowing 786 and the other at the time of harvest. It is accepted as fact in the brotherhoods that at planting time the boli copulate so as to produce issue at the time of harvest, hence the hymn to Nama which says: "boli fyerela ka den' (the boli has flowered to bring forth fruit)." These ceremonies are accompanied by orgies [262] during which the celebrants, both men and women, are said to indulge in sexual licentiousness. It may be concluded from these two series of happenings that the rites seek by appropriate mimicry to encourage the fruitfulness of nature.

794 There are other indications which show that it is indeed 776 toward nature that the rites are directed. In certain brother- 825 hoods, notably the Kore, the costumed officiants who farm the cartege pretend to be wara-u (wild beasts), suruku-u (hyenas), golo-u (monkeys), and other terrifying inhabitants of the bush (1).

1. They are all called wara or sogo, terms used for all wild animals. It should be noted that every nyana is called wara (power, lord).

794 It is not rash to suppose that in this case they are symbolizing
776 the role, probably primordial and in any event primary, of
825 the nyana to control the supernatural and particularly malevolent forces of the bush. As a matter of fact, the most popular and important nyana are the protectors of the harvests which represent virtually the only property of the natives. One of the nyana is even especially concerned with agricultural work (2);

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2. In the native vocabulary, "to work" (tya-ke, short for tyi-ya-ke) primarily means "to work in the fields."

this is Tyi-wara (god of agricultural work), who presides over the first clearing of the land at the beginning of the winter season.

In any case, whether the animal is regarded as the visible form of a spirit or, if one prefers, the perceptible manifestation of a supernatural force, the belief is strengthened by the common practice of the interdict (tne) and, still more, by the magical acts required of a hunter.

Another aspect of this belief is seen in the choice of an animal to represent the mount of the nyana dugu-da-siri.

794 It is for a similar reason that the brotherhoods usually
825 adopt the name of an animal: for the Nama this is usually the hyena (suruku) (3); for the Komo, the hyena (suruku) or the

[552]

3. The hyena is often designated by the words nama-koro (old Nama) or suya-koro (old sorcerer) when the speaker does not want to use the animal's real name (suruku). There is a whole vocabulary for use to "avoid" the names that are dangerous to utter, and the name of the hyena is one of them.

elephant (sama); for the Dyara, the lion; for the Kono, the ostrich (kono-ba), etc. It is said that the cries, the shouts, and

794 The sounds of the [263] trumpets to announce the meetings
825 imitate the cry of the animal (1).

[534]

1. This is true of the Dyara. In the brotherhood of that name, a cry like a roar is drawn from an instrument made as follows: the hollow trunk of a palm tree is covered at one end by a tightly stretched skin; a long thong or rope runs down inside the trunk from the center of the skin; the operator pulls the rope tight, then lets it slip through his hand by jerks, and having achieved a certain facility, he succeeds in producing a noise like a roar.

000 Can it be that the costumes made of bark strips, the strange masks, and the mimicry of the people who wear them are connected with mysteries which are now unknown to us, either because they have been adopted without understanding and thus deformed beyond recognition, or because they are the last vestiges of far older cults, today unfathomable since they no longer exist?

Did Egypt inspire these cults, as some people believe? Or rather was Egypt herself influenced originally by a preexistent Black civilization whose last surviving traces she kept alive by altering them? This is an unlimited field for speculation.

794 Generally speaking, the cult is in obeyance on Monday
805 and Thursday of each week. The same days are holidays from communal work and are left to the "poor people" for their own profit. There must be some connection between these two facts, and it should further be noted that, as a result, the religious week is reduced to five days. A question naturally arises, therefore, as to whether the week as now observed is truly native. It seems likely that the week is an oriental contribution, more specifically Islamic. It could be a coincidence that Islam organized slavery, and when a seven-day week was adopted, two days were allotted to the gens de poëste, as used to be said IN FRANCE.

794 in France. The question is too complex, however, to be treated here.

794 782 For important ceremonies, the faithful bring the nyana-tigi a contribution in proportion to their means; each of them brings grain, livestock, fowl, cowries, cloth, etc., and no one is so poor that he cannot furnish one or more jugs of beer (dlo). Everything thus collected is offered to the nyana at the general meeting of the faithful through the intermediary, the nyana-tigi. In accordance with [264] established ritual, the victims are slaughtered and libations made. Then the nyana-tigi gives thanks to the god and asks him to continue to protect his worshipers. Finally, all or part of the food is eaten at a joint banquet. This is a true communion, by means of which the god and his worshipers on the one hand, and the worshipers among themselves on the other, are closely bound together. These banquets, [786] which often last for several days, degenerate into orgies.

Internal Discipline

794 A result of the cult is that the brotherhood forms an organized body in which each member is subject to a discipline that may be summarized under these three terms: secrecy, obedience, solidarity.

Secrecy is obligatory, especially for anything having to do with the cult. Divulging the mysteries carries with it a [688] punishment which, depending on circumstances, may vary from a simple reprimand to condemnation to death, with fines, flogging, etc., as intermediate forms. People who are known to be unable to keep a secret are, on that account, excluded from the brotherhoods of nyana; this excludes women, children, certain people of caste, etc.

The obedience required of the faithful is shown by the seemingly fantastic rules enforced during the official banquets of certain brotherhoods. Members are fined for very odd infractions: sitting down, getting up, spitting, etc., before being given permission or being asked to do so. This is obviously a means of swelling the common fund, but it is also a means of making the adept realize that he is subservient to the sect.

794 Besides, this submission, if one may call it that, is merely a corollary of the solidarity existing between nyana-den'. This solidarity is shown to the profane whenever litigation arises outside the sphere of the brotherhood; nyana-den' do not [696] hesitate to bear false witness for the sole purpose of helping a guilty co-member evade the sanctions of profane jurisdiction.

For failure to fulfill his obligations or for any other wrong considered reprehensible by the brotherhood, the nyana-den' comes under the jurisdiction of this brotherhood.

Fearing the supernatural retribution which his misdeeds [783] [265] may provoke and seeing portents of it in apparently inexplicable things that cause him pain and surprise, the nyana-den' himself seeks pardon through some kind of expiation, determined by his own intuition alone or by one of the clergy.

On other occasions, the guilty person fails to denounce himself, not merely by deliberate design but sometimes because [787] he is not aware of his wrongdoing and its consequences. In that case it is the wara-da (oracle) who reveals it in a trance.

794 695 The clergy is led, by means of self-accusation, denunciation by witnesses, or accusations based on the most varied imputations, to learn, to investigate, to adjudicate, and to punish the acts of the faithful in material as well as spiritual matters. In the process of carrying out its duties in this respect, the clergy uses every imaginable means of obtaining information and of examination, but the proof of guilt that they particularly want is confession.

The various procedures used to persuade the accused to confess his wrongs may be put under three headings: oath, torture, and divination.

When an oath is taken, the boli is provided with an accessory known as the siri-kun' (knot), to which seven straws are attached. The person taking the oath (kali boli la, "to swear on the boli") then pronounces the usual formula: "May the nyana take my heart and my liver if I lie." When two people exchange this oath in order to vouch for their respective statements, they are said to have "tied the boli" (boli syen'), and it is believed that anyone who perjures himself will be put to death

794 by the god. It is conceded, however, that a perjurer may re-
695 deem himself by gifts and sacrifices whose nature and value are decided by the clergy.

Torture includes the most diverse types of moral and physical constraint thought to be efficacious in getting a confession: usually flogging, imprisonment, starvation, mutilation, and other tortures, often horrible. A method that often succeeds and that is commonly used is to offer up the unknown guilty party to the wrath of the nyana; it is not at all rare for the guilty person to confess at the first signs of discomfort due to auto-suggestion. It is so firmly established that the wrath of the nyana is always implacable and terrible that innocent persons, accused only for the sake of exploiting them, have been known to confess abominable crimes which they [266] never committed, for instance, in cases of accusation of sorcery.

[787] Divination comes to the support of the inquiry, and the deity's revelations are combined with endless spying among the members.

It goes without saying that these various methods of inquiry are not used alone; they are combined so as to provide mutual support.

On the basis of findings made in this way, the clergy passes judgment and has the sentence carried out in a despotic and often mysterious manner (1).

> 1. Indeed, most of the brotherhoods owe their terrifying reputations to the fact that sentences resulting in death or disappearance have been carried out by ways and agents who remain mysterious.

794 The penalties are varied and arbitrary; the importance
696 of a misdemeanor is not determined in advance on the basis of specific characteristics. Rather, everything depends on the clergy's interest in the case, and this interest is influenced by the most appalling intrigues. Therefore, even though the accused is guilty of the most terrible crimes, he may escape punishment entirely provided he can satisfy the demands of the

794 clergy. On the other hand, an innocent man will be over-
696 whelmed by mental and physical torture if he is unable to give his executioners what they demand.

681 Corporal punishment includes flogging, chains, starvation, torture, and death by all imaginable methods. Pecuniary punishment includes fines, confiscation, and pillage. The condemned man is also sometimes forced to labor for the clergy or is even enslaved by them.

Social and Political Role of the Brotherhoods

794 By its actions, the brotherhood, an artificial family,
776 tends to take the place of the natural family whose organization
769 it has borrowed and whose cult it has banished. It is easy to account for this.

The cult of the manes is the framework of the family and of the communities derived from it. The brotherhood has cleverly managed to set up such a cult by specially honoring the manes of its high priests, its famous members, and its eminent worshipers. [267]

Gradually, the nyana dugu-da-siri, protector of the territorial community, has given way to the nyana of the boli, a more powerful god since his territory is unlimited.

It is true that in spite of everything the tradition remains, and even though they are largely over-shadowed by the nyana of the boli, the manes of the ancestors and the nyana dugu-da-siri are still venerated. Though sowing and harvesting are celebrated
[731] with great pomp by the brotherhoods, still, when a disaster,
[782] epidemic, or terrible drought occurs, sacrifices are promptly offered to the manes and the gods of the place. People may fear their anger, but they also have confidence in their good will, and it is felt that their severity can always be tempered. On the other hand, the nyana of the boli are supposed to be basically evil, and their worship seems intended to ward off their malignity rather than to obtain their favor.

794 This duality in religion brings about extremely compli-
621 cated interrelationships which bind the communities and

794 621 brotherhoods together, although the latter seem to dominate the former. These brotherhoods hem in the communities they dominate by abusively extending their jurisdiction far beyond its proper limits. Indeed, the faithful are not the only ones who are subject to the judgments handed down by the brotherhoods, whose clergy make decisions affecting not only members involved but often also third parties in the neighborhood or even people from neighboring or distant regions. The brotherhoods are tyrannical toward their own members and no less so to strangers, who often see no way of escaping persecution short of asking to be received into the ranks.

794 661 182 Thus, it is apparent how a brotherhood increases in size and in power as time passes. Each year it takes in the young people at the end of the soli, and as a result all the communities are at length absorbed by it live in it and for it (1). It

1. The following is a typical example.

[778] In the village of Marenna (Fouladougou Arbala), the natives belong to the cult of Ba-ku. This boli consists of a small sheaf of roots of the indigo tree. For every newborn child the nyana-tigi makes and consecrates a small Ba-ku, which he places in a gourd and puts in the temple of this nyana. At the time of the soli, the child becomes affiliated with the cult, takes the boli placed in the gourd for him at birth and henceforth wears it on his person. All the families in Marenna are thus closely involved in the cult of Ba-ku, being, as it were, engendered by this god to whom each person owes both physical and spiritual birth. Ba-ku comes from Sangaran, and his high priest is a Dyara; that is why he is invoked and called by the expression Ba-ku Dyara Sangaran-ka. The word ba-ku literally means "tail of a

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goat," and, indeed, that describes the appearance of the little bunch of roots. It is possible that the word Ba-ku is merely the profane name and that the real name of the nyana is kept secret.

claims eminent rights over every person or thing it touches, as a consequence of the supernatural power of the nyana protecting them. [268]

So it is that the brotherhood, by what might be called divine right, comes to play a political role which is inconsistent only because it was not designed to play such a role. Let an ambitious man come forth, one who knows how to make use of the organization and its redoubtable power for his own ends, and the brotherhood then becomes the cradle of a veritable political state.

So it is that when the regular authority cannot firmly resist its encroachments, the brotherhood becomes a kind of high judge and uses that high office to establish a reign of terror which exploits the defections due to hatreds its own machinations have aroused and encouraged. This wretched game naturally brings repercussions within the brotherhood itself: the nyana-den' are at each other's throats, and the grimmest dramas accompany the indulgence of the lowest instincts. The chronicle of Ségou bears witness to these facts.

[578]

It is, unfortunately, by no means unusual for the established authority to condone these crimes through weakness, interest, or membership in the brotherhood. As a result, innumerable regions have fallen into anarchy.

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That is why and how the brotherhoods have been the cause of a great deal of unrest in the native milieu. As a refuge for escaped slaves, malcontents, vagabonds, intriguers, in a word, for all enemies of public order, the brotherhoods everywhere set themselves up in opposition to regularly constituted authority, and when they are unable to take it over, seek to thwart it by taking the head into partnership.

The dynastic convulsions of most of the Sudanese empires, especially that of Ségou, are in large part explained by the usurpations of these great brotherhoods of nyana.

794 182 578 The family, too, has been assailed, perverted, [269] and disorganized, because dissident elements found support in the brotherhoods that made it possible for them to combat their "own people" in the communities and sometimes even to bring about their downfall.

Moreover, within the community, they set up the cult of nyana of the boli in opposition to the cult of the manes. In associations of communities, the nyana dugu-da-siri has been gradually abandoned in favor of these imperious and jealous nyana of the boli. Although the latter could not entirely eliminate the former because of their failure to appropriate the rights over the land, they have nevertheless eclipsed it by their all-encompassing authority. So it has come about that nyana of the boli have been created who are honored as protectors of the citizens, although they do not own the soil.

It is remarkable that these destroyers of the natural family always seek to organize themselves as artificial families by taking on certain characteristics of the family: communities of inalienable spiritual and temporal property; communities of the dead and the living; the cult of the manes of the high priests, etc.

It is the secular action of these laboratories of magic that has most strongly shaken the foundations of native society. Only a strong power could contend with them effectively, and such a power has seldom presented itself. Islam has often been their implacable enemy and yet has actually strengthened them by introducing a knowledge of oriental occultism.

3. Some Important Brotherhoods

794 The cult is the essential framework of all the brotherhoods. One must know its principal characteristics in order to understand the organization and operation of any brotherhood. Each nyana has its special cult, characterized by particular traits, of course, but these differences do not change the basic elements in which all cults of nyana resemble each other.

Therefore, although descriptions of all the different cults would no doubt bring out an interesting variety of details,

794 still -- aside from the fact that this would not appreciably alter the broad lines already indicated -- the present state of our knowledge makes it possible to describe in detail only a few great brotherhoods which are widespread among [270] the Bambara with whom we are here concerned; these are based on cults of Komo, Nama, Kore, and Nya.

The Komo

794 173 The Komo is held in particularly high esteem in the Ségou area. According to the accepted legend, the Komo was brought from Mandé country, where it is supposed to have been introduced by El Hadj Moussa. El Hadj Moussa, having failed to obtain pardon for his sins during a visit to Mecca, turned to the study of magic. He obtained the Komo in exchange for a miraculous shirt (dioki) which some sorcerers had woven for him and which had the faculty of growing longer or shorter at the pleasure of its owner (1).

1. Another example of miraculous cloth, in that case a gift of the marabouts of Djenné, is referred to in the chronicle of Ségou in connection with the installation of Bakari, son of Biton (p.).

El Hadj Moussa is also supposed to have brought a no less miraculous canoe from Mecca, which is still preserved in the greatest secrecy in a swamp in the vicinity of Kouri, near Naréna, in Mandé country.

Finally, he brought back many boli. As he was coming up the Niger, some of them fell into the river and were transformed; the n-tigi (silurids or torpedo fish) is thought to be the result of such a transformation. [825]

According to another legend, the Komo was brought from the Orient, not by El Hadj Moussa but by Fa Koli Sissokho, a follower of El Hadj Moussa.

Whatever may be the truth of the matter, the Bambara are convinced that the Komo was brought to Ségou from Mandé

794 country and that the Bambara Massa-si, who had fled to
173 Gadiaga, received it, in turn, from one Namori or Nyamori, a former slave who had been initiated into the mysteries of the Koré and who, for that reason, was named Kor-dyuga.

794 Over and above the general characteristics already noted,
778 the Komo has the following peculiarities.

It is said that to make it perfect the boli of the Komo requires the body of a degeni, that is, of a very young boy. Thus, the body of the Komo of Tiguini (20 to 40 kilometers from Ségou) is said to be none other than the body of the grandson [271] of its founder. The same thing is said of the boli of the Komo at Kégué in Bani territory.

This boli-den'-fa is equipped with three iron tubes, and the whole thing is called tama gengen-ba (1). There is a horn

1. The term Komo dyoloro, meaning "chain of the Komo," is used in front of the uninitiated. The wara-da, oracle of the Komo, is called dyoloro samana, "he who drags the chain" of the Komo. In the special language of the cult, "sacrificing to the Komo" is expressed by an bi nege son' (we pay homage to the iron).

at the end of one of these tubes, with an opening serving as a mouthpiece. The sound drawn from this trumpet of sorts by the wara-da announces a meeting of the Komo.

The usual accessories accompany the boli-den'-fa: korti, kana, and siri-kun', which we have already mentioned.

When not in use for ceremonies, all this equipment is
[281] put into baskets similar to those used to transport cotton. The tama-gengen-ba are wrapped in a tiger skin. A hut with a conical roof, similar to the native huts, serves as a temple and holds all the regalia. It is called the Komo-bon' (hut of the Komo).

When he is on duty, the wara-da, "oracle" of the Komo,
793 is dressed in a special costume consisting of a mask and a cloak.
794 The mask is surmounted by horns and does not cover the face, but
778 rather is affixed to a stick hidden in the folds of the cloak; it goes up and down at the pleasure of the wara-da, who is completely

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794 covered by the cloak made of feathers from guinea fowl and
778 chickens. Beneath this garb, the wara-da performs all sorts of acrobatics. Skillfully manipulating the mask and the cloak during ritual dances, he gives the illusion, in the light of the fires, of a fantastic creature whose cries, transmitted through the horn, terrify even the initiated.

793 In addition to the wara-da, the clergy includes: a
794 Komo-tigi, high priest; some muru-kala-tigi, sacrificers; a da-ro-tigi, porter, who announces and prepares for the meetings; and a Komo-dyeli, herald. There are also student wara-da, called soma-den' (literally, "elder sons" in the special language), who act as assistants, and finally, there are many other auxiliaries who form a cortege with the wara-da when he carries the boli in nocturnal processions. These people are grouped together under the term tie-den' or tigi-den' ("sons of the master" in the special language). Conspicuous among them are the ta-tugu who [272] carry the flaming torches which are so characteristic of the nocturnal processions.

When the wara-da makes known the revelations of the god, he speaks through the tube with the horn. Since he uses the special language and since the tube distorts the sounds, the Komo-tigi must interpret for him. It is the Komo-dyeli who shouts the revelation which echoes through the night.

794 At the time of the two great annual ceremonies, the
796 wara-da takes the boli and the other liturgical equipment to the sacred grove. The Komo-tigi directs the ceremonies. The sacrifices are entrusted to the muru-kala-tigi among whom are to be noted: the one who brings the victim and who, when the ceremony takes place in the temple, leads it across the threshold (1); and the one who removes the victim and carries its body

1. This door is then called nyena-ma don'-da, "entry of the living," in the special language, and the muru-kala-tigi who brings the victim in is called da-kuna-sigi or "master of the fatal (literally 'bitter') door."

794 796 over the threshold (2). The ceremonies are announced and

2. Then the door is called su-bo-da, "exit of the corpse," and the sacrificer is called moso-bolo (literally, "woman's hand").

[534] accompanied by a strident, wild orchestra made up of drums (denu-ba) which are accompanied by iron instruments, called kinge, consisting of pieces of metal that are struck against each other or shaken to obtain sound from the rings attached to them. The "cry" of the Komo, which the wara-da shouts through his horn, is accompanied by a kind of reed pipe played by his companions.

[782] There is nothing unusual about the offerings, sacrifices, or communion. The blood of the victim is used to wash the boli and the priests, as will be described for the Nama.

Processions held at night are always very effective, and they strike terror into the hearts of not only the uninitiated but also the initiated themselves. This long cortege, lighted by the torchbearers who shout and dash about like madmen while the wara-da gives the "cry" of the Komo, makes a very strong impression on everyone who sees or hears it (3). [273]

3. Elsewhere, the Komo meets in the daytime, and in the old days, notably in Bobo country, it was very popular (cf. Binger, Du Niger au golfe de Guinée [From the Niger to the Gulf of Guinea], Vol. 1, p. 379, and Monteil, De Saint-Louis à Tripoli par le Tchad [From Saint-Louis to Tripoli via Chad], p. 88). We have already seen that all the officiants in the brotherhood are called dou, "the hidden people," because of the disguises they affect. "The dou are persons ludicrously disguised, wearing clothing on which are sewed bits of da-fou (native

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hemp), palm fibers, and leaves. On their heads they wear a cap or calotte, also made of hemp and surmounted by a yellowish-red wooden crest or a bird's beak, also of wood. There are two holes in the calotte for the eyes. These dou are given free dio by the populace which makes up their cortege. They wander about the village and fields day and night..." (Binger).

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[796] There is never any cult service or ceremony on Monday or Thursday.

The clergy serves as an administrative council for the property of the Komo-ya (brotherhood of the Komo) in accordance with the general principles already noted. The Komo-tigi of Tiguini, we have been told, is especially famous for respecting the principles which give the treasury of the brotherhood an exclusively fraternal character.

The Komo-ya are mutually independent, and all have experienced the kind of deviations which give rise to political action. The Komo has played a preponderant role in the affairs of the clan of Ségou, as is evident from the chronicle.

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539 Young men are taken into the brotherhood during the harvest festivals. They appear before the circle of initiates, while those present sing:

Da woro-na nana,
Bolo-ko den da woro-na,
Toro man na ko la-nyini.
Sira bo nin' ye, ko dugu le den',
Sira bo nin' ye ko dugu le sira.

Translation: "The sixth day has come, the sixth day of the newborn (1), and there has been no accident. Let us show the

1. That is, those who have just been born to a new status through the soli or bolo-ko.

794 796 539 way to this child, the way which the village follows."

One by one they pass before the wara-da who, dressed in full regalia, is supposed to receive their oath. The oracle places the tube with the horn on each boy's head in turn, and the following dialogue takes place:

--Mun' b'i kun' (What is it you have on your head?), asks the oracle.

A kala be n kun' (I have his symbol (2) on my head). [274]

2. Kala, literally, is the cylindrical part of a thing; here, in the special language, it is a way of alluding to the tube with its horn and thus is a kind of symbol of the Komo.

I y'a ye wa (Have you seen it [the Komo])?

Ne m'a ye (No, I have not seen it).

I y'a fo ma min'ye, k'i kun' ti ki' son' n'i bien' ta a k'ifa (If you speak of it to anyone, may it [the Komo] smash your head and may it [the Komo] take your heart and your liver and kill you).

A ka ne fa (May it kill me).

I sirila nyama-n-fu dyala la (You are bound by the bark thong of the nyama) (1).

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1. An allusion to the strips of bark from the nyama tree (Bauhinia reticulata), which make up the common costume for concealing the officiants during the ceremonies. It is simply a way of saying: "Do you agree to join?" And the reply is equivalent to: "Yes, for as long as I shall live."

Ne si sirila a la (My life is bound by this thong).

Ni si m'a fo ma si ye, Komo k'i kisi (If you speak to no one about all this, may the Komo protect you [literally, "save you"]).

A ka ne kisi (May he protect me).

794 For a certain length of time, the new members are kept
796 in seclusion while being instructed by initiates, especially the older ones, who see to it that they learn the songs and dances and become familiar with the special language. It is in the course of this instruction that they are given certain formulas to use for recognition among the komo-den' (sons of the Komo). The following are two examples and by no means the only ones; each Komo-ya has its own formulas, and in addition the adepts of the various Komo-ya are readily inclined to fraternize, especially when they are alone, far from their respective groups. In such cases, the identical principles of their cults bring them together, and they question each other at once:

[539] --E b' a la wa (Are you a member)?

--M ba' la (I am).

--N'i b'a la, tyoko dyira r na (If you are, show me the secret sign).

[20] This sign varies and is completely arbitrary. Sometimes it involves raising the hand with the fingers spread apart in a certain way; at other times, twigs are placed in a special pattern, and so on. [275]

The Nama

794 This cult arose at an unknown date at Missango (Bélédougou). The head of the Nama at Missango is addressed respectfully as Fura-tigi-ba, meaning literally, "grand master of the fura (fura specifically means "leaf" of a tree and, by extension, "remedy"). This is one of the expressions with double meanings which are so common in the brotherhoods: Fura-tigi-ba, the great physician, great savant, grand master.

The Nama is also called Nama-koro and Suya-koro, and a certain Nama is called Siriman 'fin'.

[778] Objects used in worship include; the Nama-kon-golo-u (craniums of the Nama), which are a kind of headdress, usually made of linge wood and shaped like fantastic birds; the wara-se (literally, "foot of the wara"), a small wooden board about a meter high with three horns affixed to it; and a similar board with two horns, called nye-bla.

794 [778] There are, of course, the usual accessories: kana, korti, siri-kun', pottery, bells, horns, and so forth.

Most of these objects are stored in a small hut called Nama-bon', similar to the native huts.

794 778 The ceremonies take place in a grove which is reserved for the purpose. If there appears to be not enough privacy in spite of the dense foliage, or for some other reason, a palisade (dyase) or a few straw mats are put up to form an enclosure. In the special language of this brotherhood, the term for offering a sacrifice to the Nama is dyase son' (literally, "to honor the palisade").

794 The assemblage of the adepts of the same Nama constitute a Nama-ya, Nama brotherhood. Persons who wish to form a Nama-ya appeal to an existing Nama-ya to obtain the secrets or, more accurately, the rules governing the brotherhood: the mysterious words and acts by which the god (wara) is summoned and made amenable to his worshipers; cult objects; organization and role of the clergy and of the common worshipers; the liturgy, etc.

The fundamental ceremony by means of which the priest and his god are united is called furu, "union, marriage," in the special language of the brotherhoods. [276] Once a year, through the furu of the Nama, males and females, the Nama-de-u (spiritual sons of the Nama) are born. Behind this realism, required for the ordinary adept, is there not hidden a profound meaning for the initiate; is not close union with the diety a "spiritual marriage" in all the great religions? Possibly the special language is not intended merely to hide secrets from the prying curiosity of the profane, but is also intended to hide a profound meaning, today unknown to almost all the initiates, but felt and perhaps even known, at least vaguely, by some of them!

793 794 In every Nama-ya there are various functions and ranks, corresponding to different grades of initiation. The grand master, Nama-tigi, is often the person who contributed the most for the expenses of founding the Nama-ya; he directs and watches over the cult and is therefore a feared and formidable personage.

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794 He is assisted by the dye-n-fa-u (masters of truth), among whom those who wear the headdress called Nama-kongolo are the oracles (wara-da) of the Nama. Other assistants have the duty of holding the horned boards (wara-se and nye-bla) during the ceremonies.

One adept serves as factotum under the title da-ro-tigi (master of the entrance) (1).

> 1. During the night when the Nama goes about the village to drive out sorcerers, the da-ro-tigi runs ahead of the dye-n-fa who wear the Nama-kongolo. Shaking his bell, he warns people off the road followed by the dye-n-fa, and he carries a torch to reveal the inquisitive. If he finds any such person, he warns the dye-n-fa in the special language to halt or to change their course. Then he questions the intruder, chases him off with blows, curses him, or, on the contrary, takes him into the group. He is thus truly "the one who guards the entrance," but he is like a concierge rather than a master who agrees or refuses to receive the visitor whom the concierge has admitted. We have pointed out an analogous emphasis in the title of ton'-masa, given to the head of the servants of the ton' even though the term literally means "head of the ton'."

This clergy is recruited by co-optation, and anyone named to it or promoted in it must pay for the privilage. The cleric is even more bound to secrecy than the common worshiper, since any indiscretion on his part would reveal the secrets of the cult.

794 The common adherents or the faithful are called Nama-de-u (children of the Nama), that is, spiritual sons of the Nama, but we shall see that when allusions are made during the ceremonies to a kind of material birth, this is plebeian mythology.

In order to be Nama-de, the individual must be approved [277] by the clergy, pay a fee, and promise not to betray in any way the secrets of the brotherhood, never to injure a fellow-member and especially never to testify against him, to contribute to the expenses of the cult by making annual offerings in proportion to his means.

The adepts are legally responsible to the Nama-ya for all their acts. This spiritual family is infinitely more tyrannical than the temporal family since, in order to consolidate its authority, the clergy does not hesitate to use any means even criminal; fines are the most profitable for pecuniary returns. The totality of entrance fees, gifts, offerings, and fines constitutes the treasury of the Nama and hence of the Nama-ya. The Nama-tigi administers it with the help of the council of the dye-n-fa. It is current practice for this clergy to appropriate all the property for its own use. This does not, however, nullify the principle that any unfortunate adept, whatever the reason for his situation, has a right to ask for aid from the common fund on condition that he repay the loan with interest when his situation improves.

This material exploitation of the cult of the Nama can be seen in another form: although not an adept of the Nama, one can obtain its good offices for a price fixed by the clergy. The other means of exploitation, extortion and political deviation, discussed above, are likewise practiced by the Nama-ya.

It is the material role of the Nama-ya which really interests the majority of the natives. It is the showy exhibitions, accompanied by prolonged orgies that are mischievous, which have given the Nama, as well as the Komo, a bad reputation, albeit well deserved.

There is no real hierarchy among the Nama-ya. The Nama-tigi of Missango is held in particular esteem, and, in general, any Nama-ya keeps on good terms with the group that initiated it, but there is nothing like what might be called an archbrotherhood. On the contrary, any Nama-den' certainly has access to any Nama-ya, and this fact makes it likely that, under given circumstances, there may be very widespread solidarity. In the old days it was very useful to be a member of a Nama-ya

794 if one had to travel, since the Dyuola [Diula] and other travelers were at the mercy of the whims and banditry of the [278] Nama-den' (1) and only avoided them to a certain extent by claiming

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1. Cf. Monteil, Binger, op. cit.; at the time of the great annual festivals of the Komo, all trading was halted for several days. Strangers could be sure of being respected only by claiming membership in the brotherhood. The same was true of the Nama.

to be of the Nama-den'. Even Moslems often became adherents of the Nama; all that was required of them was absolute secrecy and a few gifts in exchange for the secret passwords.

794 796 782 There are two great annual ceremonies: one at planting and the other at harvest, the dates for both decided by the Nama-tigi and his council. Each of them involves offerings, sacrifice, communion, and a nocturnal procession. Young members are usually admitted at the harvest ceremony.

The initiates gather for the sacrifice before the temple (Nama-bon'). Only the Nama-tigi and his clergy may enter the sacred place; the common worshipers remain outside. The sacrificial animals are brought up. Two sacrificers (muru-kala-tigi), naked to the waist, stretch their arms toward the four cardinal points and spit three times in each direction. Two dye-n-fa, also naked to the waist, hold the pieces of wood bearing horns and face the faithful. Three times the sacrificers utter the cry, "ture-dyo," twice alternating this cry with another, "dyo-Nama." They invoke the god two times, and then they slaughter the victims, sometimes inside the temple and sometimes outside.

The blood is carefully collected in receptacles, and the ashes of straw are added to it. All the cult objects, especially the boli itself, are smeared with the mixture. The Nama-tigi and the other principal initiates remove their clothing to anoint themselves with the same mixture and do not put on their garments again until the blood has dried on their bodies.

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796 The food is eaten by those attending the ceremony; the millet mush which constitutes the meal is supposed to have been prepared by the wives of the dignitaries. This communion is the most important act of the ceremony.

When night comes, the procession of the Nama takes place. Its aim is to rid the village and its environs of sorcerers, the eaters of souls known as [279] suba (1), and to discover and

1 See Chapter 7 below. [Not translated.]

destroy the objects called siri which bear witness to the measures taken by the sorcerers to harm the natives.

The ritual cries of ture-dyo and dyo-Nama break into the racket of trumpets and drums while the Nama wanders about. The dye-n-fa, wearing the symbolic headdress (Nama-kongolo) and preceded by the da-ro-tigi tinkling his bell to warn people to clear the way, is followed or surrounded by torchbearers (called ta-tugula-n-tigi) who shout a hymn in praise of the god.

[539] A dyigina so Nama fambali: He is our host, mighty Nama.
A fyerela ka den': He blossoms in order to bear fruit.
Suba yo, nin kera malo-ko ye: Oh! Suba (2), shame on you!"

2. Literally, the "bonds" (see Chapter 7 below). [Not translated]

One of the persons in his entourage shouts defiance and curses in all directions, aimed at the suba, the eaters of souls.

It is during this procession that the dye-n-fa, at the instigation of the bearer of the symbol, discover the siri-fen' (2) [Ed., see footnote 2 above]; these are the objects used by the eaters of souls to accomplish their sinister designs or are the remains of their macabre repasts. Here it is a knife, there a pot, elsewhere a bit of human flesh (or so it is claimed)! All these things are dug up amidst cries, exclamations, and imprecations by the whole company.

A suba discovered in the course of these proceedings is hotly pursued, and it is said that, exhausted by the chase and

overpowered by the god, he always comes to die near the temple. When this happens, the wretch's corpse is left there, naked; his clothing is thrown to the roof of the temple where it remains for a long time as an example. The siri-fen' are also displayed near the temple, within sight of the women, who are allowed to come and look at them.

It is just prior to these solemn sorties of the Nama that the clergy begins the proceedings to admit the youths who have just completed the soli. In the center of a circle of the faithful in front of the temple, they take their oath of secrecy:

--I y'a fo ma min' ye, boli k'i son' ta, k'i been'ta, ka [280] dun' i dyu fe'ka bo i da fe: if you speak to anyone, may the boli take your heart and your liver, may he go in through your anus and go out through your mouth.

--O ka ke: Let it be so.

-- Ni e ma fo ma ye, k'i kisi suba-u ma k'i son' si la, k'i son' keneya la: If you tell no one, may he protect you from the suba, grant you descendants, and give you good health.

-- O ka ke: Let it be so.

The new members must pay an entrance fee of a franc and ten kola nuts and must go through a kind of initiation. For a fortnight they live apart under supervision and are required to learn the songs and dances under the tutelage of the clergy and old men. They are told the significance of the words with double meanings, which constitute the language peculiar to the brotherhood, and are also given the formula of recognition, of which the following are some examples:

-- E b'a la wa? (Are you one of us?)

-- Ne b'a la (I am).

-- Fere tyon' kan' (Show the sign).

He shows it and explains it. The questioner then concludes:

--Dya! e b'a la, kaf (You are indeed one of us)!

794

The Kore (1)

1. One also hears "Kote" and, in the Bani region, "Kwere." It should be noted that these three words, Kore, Kote, and Kwere, all have an ending which is frequently found in Soninké but not in Bambara.

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The Kore is particularly popular in the Bani region, that is to say, the riverine area of this tributary of the Niger, in the part that is on a line with Ségou.

This brotherhood has the peculiarity of having a cult which honors the three divinities always worshiped by the Bambara: the manes, the god of the soil, and the nyana of the boli. Therefore the site of the brotherhood is the chosen site of the god of the soil, usually a tree within a grove (Kore-tu, "grove of the Kore") near the village. A kara, that is, the little board symbolic of the dead, and a surku-kongolo (skull of a hyena), the boli of the Kore and for that reason called the Kore-kongolo (skull of the Kore), are kept here.

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The clergy and its assistants form a large body of personnel that includes all of the faithful. [281]

In addition to the high priest, Kore-tigi, there are the "people of the kara" (kara-ma-u) and the persons who wear masks, called wara-u (1) (wild beasts) or sogo-u (savage animals),

1. The terms wara or sogo are usually applied to all those who have some function, from the suruku to the ngoni-sama.

among whom are hyenas (suruku), lions (dyara), and monkeys (suba). The persons in costume, called Kor'dyuga (2), are for the

2. The term seems to come from the Soninké language: Kore yugo or Kor'-dyuga, "man of the Kore." The expression Koré-duga-tigi is a corruption

794 of Kore-dyuga-tigi and has the same meaning.

[301] most part strangely accoutered dancers, each of whom dresses as his fancy dictates. As ornaments, the Kor'dyugs wear strings of beautiful red beans, which are inedible, called n-go ble. These beans are about the size of a large dragée and throughout the western Sudan are used as protection against evil spirits.

[292] These dancers have a leader, the Koro-duga-tigi or Kor'dyuga-tigi, who is further distinguished by a kind of cloak made entirely of bits of reed stalks. On his head he wears a conical hat made of the same reeds, and in his hand he carries a long wand from which hang birds' skulls, packets of sorghum straw, gourd stems, etc. In addition to the dancers, the clergy is accompanied by

[785] flagellants (bisa-tyi-la), torchbearers (ta-tugu-la-n-tigi), and people who lash themselves with bundles of thorns (the ngoni-sa-ma-u).

[534] Of course, the Kore has its orchestra, which includes drums (denu-ba), a kind of castanet (kinge), and gourds filled with seeds or pebbles (nkude) and pierced with holes.

794 The cult has the usual ceremonies, with the two great festivals at the times of planting and harvesting. On these oc-
796 casions the Kore-tigi officiates, as the nyana-n-son-na-ba does with respect to nyana dugu-da-siri. He makes the offerings, performs the sacrifices, and sets forth the requests at the foot of the sacred tree, after having thanked the god-protector. The kara and the Kore-kongolo are sprinkled with the blood of the victims; thus, the manes and the nyana of the boli are honored simultaneously.

[764] There is always a meeting of the brotherhood when a Kore-de dies. There are offerings, sacrifices, and communion with all the offerings, which require one or more days of orgies to be consumed, depending on the importance of the deceased, because elders in [282] important posts like that of nyana-n-son-na-ba, etc., are particularly honored at their death.

Young men are admitted only once every seven years, and it is at this time that the ceremonies are most elaborate.

794 At dusk on the day selected, the clergy proceeds with the great-
796 est pomp to the Kore-tu (grove of the Kore). The orchestra, composed of drums (denu-ba), bells (kinge), and gourds (nkude), leads the procession. Then come the high priest (Kore-tigi) and the kara-ma, "people of the plank of the dead" (kara), which one of them carries. Finally comes the dense crowd, motley and noisy, of wara-u, Kor-dyuga, bisa-tyi-la, ta-tugu-la-n-tigi, and ngoni-sa-ma.

Everyone is performing his role. The masked men imitate the beasts they represent; the costumed Kor'dyuga act like clowns; the flagellants make their switches hiss. Thus the crowd approaches the Kore-tu amidst a great din, but only the clergy may enter it. The bearer of the kara takes his place under the sacred tree. On orders from the Kore-tigi, silence falls for the reception of the Kore-de postulants.

[516] The latter form a line facing the tree and the kara. They prostrate themselves in the dust for the duration of the sacred hymn of the Kore, which begins with the words, "Dyante Kore de-u." When they rise, they are dyante-ma-u, "affiliates."

The members thus admitted remain in the sacred grove for 15 days and are not allowed to return to the village. There they are instructed by the "elders." Then they are assigned to the different groups of wara; theoretically, an eldest son enters the group to which his father belongs, while the rest of the sons may choose whichever group they prefer. In addition to his duties during ceremonies, each wara has a certain job: the hyenas (suruku) guard and patrol the sacred grove and question the inquisitive to learn whether they are members (dyante ma); the Kore-duga see to the maintenance of the grove, clearing its environs in order to guard against the grove's being damaged by brush fires.

794 The offerings and the sacrifices, and then the communion
796 repast, follow the ceremony of admission and are accompanied
786 and followed by dancing and singing. The orgy then goes on for several days, as long as food remains. The various groups assemble for their dances, and the ta-tugu-la-n-tigi start the proceedings. With a flaming torch [283] in each hand, they chase each other, singe each other's backs and chests, and in the

794 process, let loose a rain of sparks which the Kore-duga zealously
794 put out with leafy branches. Then each dancer, carrying what
786 is left of his torch, kneels before the drums, making an obscene gesture which arouses the laughter of the onlookers and giving the cries, roars, or laugh of the "wild beasts." Elsewhere, the nyoni-sa-ma are roaming among the drinkers, tearing at themselves with thorns. Flagellants lash themselves with switches
[785] that leave cuts from which the blood flows. They stiffen themselves against the pain and keep up this cruel sport, which once again the Kore-duga mitigate by binding up the wounds.

There appears to be no doubt that during these orgies the most shameful excesses are committed without the slightest restraint.

The Nya

794 This brotherhood is highly esteemed in all the Bambara villages in the cantons of Say and Karadougou. It is less common in the canton of Séladougou; in the canton of Saro, five-sixths of the villages are loyal to it. It is rarely found in Nyansannari, and outside these areas in the circle of Djenné, there are only a few scattered Nya brotherhoods in the Bendougou and Ségou areas.

The cult arose in the Bendougou region. As has been
[443] noted above, the villages of Moribala, Kourbadougou, Diali, etc., are market villages where all the boli are found, together with directions for using them.

778 The boli of the Nya consists of a piece of wood from 25
794 to 30 centimeters in length and from 10 to 15 centimeters in height and width. It is wrapped in an absorbent material, usually cotton. The blood of the victims and the liquid of the libations are poured on this boli, and then hairs or feathers and bits of entrails, eggs, and kola nuts are stuck to it, giving it a
[281] repulsive appearance. It is true that the boli is often concealed from inquisitive eyes by putting it in a container made of an old piece of the hide of a she-goat. However, since the container is given the same treatment as the boli it contains, it is just as disgusting.

794 This boli-den'-fa is provided with the usual boli-de:
778 kana, korti, siri-kun', etc. [284]
346 A hut with a conical roof serves as temple (Nya-bon').
534 An orchestra accompanies the ceremonies; it includes a kind of harp, made by the natives and peculiar to the Nya, plus large numbers of the usual drums, bells, and trumpets.

Since the Nya is acquired by purchase, the high priest (Nya-tigi) is theoretically the person who contributed most generously to this purchase. The office may also be attained by inheritance or by election. The truly religious role, however, is that of the wara-mina-den', the medium through which the god reveals his will or his desires and who is, therefore, the oracle (wara-da) of the Nya. A certain amount of training by appropriate methods is necessary to acquire the degree of extra-lucidity claimed by the wara-mina-den', and that is why they are recruited by co-optation.

794 Under the influence of the Nya, the wara-mina-den' falls
787 into a trance. His speech, hesitant and strange, is incomprehensible to the common people. The Nya-tigi then approaches to receive and to interpret the oracle. The inspiration of the wara-mina-den' may be spontaneous or it may be provoked and deliberately sought by him. For example, when a person dies, the wara-mina-den' questions the Nya, either at the request of the interested parties or of his own volition. For this purpose, he retires to the temple (Nya-bon'), concentrates on the point to be clarified, and after meditating, withdraws (1). He then sometimes

1. These details were given to me by a wara-mina-den' of Soun-Bambara.

falls asleep, and while he sleeps, the Nya reveals the truth to him in a dream. On other occasions the wara-mina-den' falls into a trance, and the spirit speaks through his mouth. One way or another, it is learned whether the death is to be attributed to the Nya and, if so, why. Or it is made plain that it is the work of the suba and under what form, human or otherwise, they are hiding. Or, finally, it is learned whether some other nyana struck down the deceased.

794 [787] Furthermore, every wara-mina-den' is able to read the will of the Nya and, more generally, to reveal the acts of the invisible by means of the divination practices which we have already mentioned.

[782] The sacrifices are performed by the muru-kala-tigi, and a dyeli (herald) serves as factotum, just as in the other brotherhoods. [285]

794 796 The faithful are initiated and called to participate in the cult to an extent determined by the clergy; they are called Nya-ko-den'-u, literally, "those who follow the Nya." In order to be admitted, an individual must give a chicken and 120 cowries. The next day, in the presence of the Nya-tigi and the wara-mina-den', the chicken is sacrificed on the boli by the muru-kala-tigi. The candidate is present, and in his behalf the Nya-tigi asks the Nya for protection against the suba, snakes, konti, and the evil eye. Then the neophyte is led to the sacred grove to be ritually purified with consecrated water contained in a vessel used exclusively for this purpose (1).

[783] 1. Every year at the time of harvest, the clergy undergoes ritual purification by washing in the sacred water. When a Nya is inaugurated, this purification takes place at the first harvest after the installation.

[731] The two great annual festivals are celebrated at the times of planting and harvesting. Similar ceremonies take place in connection with important events (epidemics, public catastrophes, etc.). For these ceremonies, during which the Nya is supposed to give revelations about the event in question and to answer various other questions troubling the faithful, the wara-mina-den' undergo special preparation and at the proper time drink a very heady beverage (2) which, they say, brings on their extra-lucidity.

[273] [641] 2. I learned most of these details about the Nya during a criminal trial brought against the wara-mina-den' of Soun-Bambara.

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[691]

near Djenné. The son of the chief of that village drank the special liquid, in spite of the fact that the wara-mina-den' had told him not to do so, and died. The latter was accused of having poisoned him, but when he explained the circumstances before the native tribunal, he was acquitted.

It is said that this drink is made by soaking any sort of root found while digging graves and seasoning it with pepper, salt, and red peppers. The beverage, which is highly intoxicating, is ritually consecrated.

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796 Excited by this beverage and by the songs and dances of a crowd which is itself warmed with drink, the wara-mina-den' during major festivals acts as a visionary who freely reveals the will and desires of the god. On the evening before these important ceremonies and for several evenings before that, all the clergy and their aides meet for a kind of rehearsal of the dances and songs. It is then that the young men prepare for the major roles they will later play. The [286] wara-mina-den' is particularly concerned with the training of the man who will replace him in case of need.

There is nothing of special interest to note about the brotherhood's treasury, which is acquired and appropriated just as in other brotherhoods. The political action of the Nya and its relations with the communities are also such that they require no special attention. [287]

Chapter 5

The Clans

1. General Considerations

631 It is usual to use the word "empire" or "kingdom" to describe the form of government of most of the Sudanese states and particularly those founded in Kaarta and Ségou by the

63| Bambara, with whom we are here concerned. Each writer, however, uses these terms to refer to an ill-defined type of authority, sometimes without even attempting a critical comparison with similar institutions in our own countries.

This uncertainty is accompanied by other such doubtful similarities, which result in confused conceptions. Is it not common to speak of feudalism, of a feudal system, to describe the kind of hierarchy among various native chiefs? In the Sudan, however, there is no connection between man and the land comparable to that which was the basis of the feudal system. Indeed, no such meaning is possible, since the Sudanese does not recognize any right of ownership of land. Therefore, political ties between native chiefs are never based on land; how then can one speak of a feudal system?

614 As a matter of fact, the social unit is the community based
62| on the family; it develops into a patriarchy and expands into a
63| tribe and a people. Its members are united by blood ties, which are confirmed by the ancestor cult. [288]

Since they are proud and jealous of their freedom, communities seek to remain independent. Their relationships, however, determined especially the occupation and exploitation of a common territory, force them to give up this independence, and joining together in the same cult, the sign of their spiritual solidarity, they form a dugu (1).

1. This word is not without ambiguity. On the one hand, it means "that which is below," hence, "the soil"; on the other hand, it means "place," "residence," or "at the home of." It is understood to mean "territory" or "country" occupied by a human collectivity, and by an easily understandable deviation, it likewise designates the organization which governs this collectivity in relation to this territory.

614 The dugu have definite territorial domains, and they,
621 too, prefer to live without the subordination of any one of them
631 to the others. There are relationships between some of them, such as some being offshoots of others and, due to proximity, many matrimonial unions have bound them together.

Unavoidable necessity also often forces the dugu to form leagues, coalitions, or more often associations called kafu' (literally, "union"). Depending on the circumstances, a chief is elected by the association or he usurps the authority over it. This sometimes results in the creation of a political or administrative organization. The Ségala area, also called Sénébala, is an example. "It has a local history of several centuries, hereditary chiefs of several dynasties, social and matrimonial bonds and customary institutions which have persisted for generations; it is a nation and a fatherland" (2).

2. In Marty, Etudes sur l'Islam et les tribus du Soudan [Studies on Islam and the Tribes of the Sudan], Vol. 4, p. 105.

614 It also may happen that someone who becomes a chief
631 will be so enamored with the exercise and the profits of
661 power that with the support of his followers -- relatives or others -- he will manage to retain permanent control. This association is what we here call a clan; the Bambara designate it by the word ton', applicable to any association.

As an organism of authority, this clan may be defined as an oligarchic government founded for the sole purpose of subjugating, by any means, the individuals it can reach for the sake of exploiting them. Those who are enfeoffed to this government are called "the people of So-and-So" or "the people of such and such place" by the Bambara, as by other natives, [289] for example: the Massa-si-u (1),

1. From another point of view, Massa-si-u means "descendants of Massa," and hence, "the tribe of Massa."

614 631 "the people (of the clan) of Massa"; the Segu-n-ka-u (2).

2. From another point of view, Segu-n-ka-u means "the people of the country of Ségou."

"the people (of the clan) of Ségou."

104 128 Since we are always obsessed by our own system of organization, these terms appear in our writings as village (dugu), canton or province (kafu), and empire (ton', which is a clan).

Because of the convenience of expressions that are familiar to us, we shall use this terminology in this study, and it seems essential to define briefly the value of these terms in native society in order to avoid ambiguity which, to say the least, gives rise to distorted delusions.

173 563 631 In Kaarta and the Ségou country before the time of the two great clans whose history we have given and whose development and operation we are about to describe, there were dugu which usually had no connections or at most were joined in some ephemeral kafu. These kafu were composed of a majority of Bambara mixed with Soninké and people of other races. The Soninké dugu were noted for their prosperity, sometimes even wealth, and this gave them a degree of pre-eminence over the Bambara dugu. This prosperity rested on the labor of a slave population that the Soninké had managed to acquire for the most part by commercial dealings.

This de facto hegemony usually had no corresponding political or administrative organization; its only outward sign was the scorn with which the Soninké regarded the less fortunate Bambara and, conversely, the sullen hostility of the Bambara toward the rich Marka (as they called the Soninké). As a consequence, local quarrels broke out from time to time which sometimes developed into bloody conflicts. The early history of the Massa-si clan is a good example of this state of affairs, to judge by the record in the chronicle cited above.

173 631 The Ségou-Kaarta regions, under the authority of Mandé and Songhaï clans, were in this state, in semiobscurity because they were outside the zone of direct administration by these clans.

173 631 Their people, [290] except for the payment of required tribute, lived as they pleased and followed their own customs as long as the latter did not offend the dominant clan.

2. Clan of the "People of Ségou"

Development of the Fla-n-ton' of Ségou-koro

575 561 According to the chronicle cited earlier, the origin of the clan of Ségou must be attributed to the development of a fla-n-ton'.

Those persons who have undergone the rite of soli together are united in a fla-n-bolo (band of peers); the fla-n-bolo of three consecutive soli form a fla-n-ton' (assemblage of peers). The members call themselves ton'-den' in relation to the association, and fla-ni in relation to one another.

In each fla-n-ton' there is a ton'-tigi (head of the assemblage) elected by the ton' den', who is just as likely to be a wolosu (slave born in the house) as the son of a notable; a dyala-tigi (distributor), likewise elected by the ton'-den', is especially charged with the distribution of food for the group's banquets and with the enforcement of regulations; a ton' dyeli is a kind of beadle appointed by the ton'-tigi who has him make preparations for meetings, assemble the members, announce orders, etc., and he is usually a young person of caste. There are people of all races and of all ranks in the fla-n-ton', and in the association there is theoretically, complete equality among them. Indeed, this equality explains the term fla-ni-u (peers) which they use among themselves.

In principle the aim of the fla-n-ton' (1) is to establish

1. As we have noted, there are fla-n-ton' for women as well as for men, but we are not considering them here; their role is insignificant from the present point of view.

575 561 a sense of solidarity among the ton'-den'. In reality, the bachelor ton'-den' are principally concerned with amassing as much food as possible for the sole purpose of treating themselves to copious and merry banquets from time to time; for this purpose, all means are acceptable. Each member brings to the group whatever he can lay his hands on; in addition, the society assesses its members for contributions to swell the common fund. [291] First, there are the entrance fees and assessments in kind, particularly of grain. Then there are fines for infractions of the rules, involving penalties whose purpose is simply the enrichment of the group's treasury. At certain meetings, for instance, the most ordinary acts may not be performed unless permission has been given by the ton'-tigi or the dyala-tigi. A member who squats, rises, speaks, sneezes, or laughs before being authorized to do so is fined. Finally, the society goes on organized hunts, and the game thus acquired is distributed among the members on the basis of strict equality.

[527] Ordinarily the ton'-den' meet twice a week, on Monday and Thursday; these are the free days allotted to the poor people (fantan'-u), that is, people who are wholly under control.

The ton'-tigi can make no important decision without the prior advice and agreement of the ton'-den', but this does not mean that his role is negligible. His initiative determines the orientation of acts, and he later sees to their execution. Therefore, if he is a clever man, he actually has almost sole command over an organization capable of exerting powerful pressure on the native milieu, which by nature is amorphous, because a fla-n-ton' is not an isolated group. It is linked with the one that preceded it and the one immediately following it by a kind of solidarity, so that native society, from this point of view, is made up of an uninterrupted series of fla-n-ton' closely bound to each other, since the same chain of relationship prevails for women and since every male fla-n-ton' has a brotherhood relationship with the corresponding female fla-n-ton'.

[627] If a difference arises between members of the same fla-n-ton', the "elders" of the preceding fla-n-ton', i.e., the one immediately older, intervene as conciliators to settle the quarrel.

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[628] When differences arise between fla-n-ton', an arbitrator is chosen by these fla-n-ton'; in some regions, there is even an arbitrator designated in advance.

Among all these fla-n-ton' the most conspicuous is the one having the largest number of young bachelors known as "the young masters" (kamalen'-u). Being much given to idleness, the kamalen'-u are troublemakers and rebels who seek all the [292] material pleasures and devote their talents to opposing the fa, the bina, and those who, as masters of the community, impose on the young the whole weight of an authority which is absolute and often niggling.

This explanation makes it plain that the post of ton'-tigi is no sinecure. In order to maintain his role honorably, the ton'-tigi must be capable of exerting his authority in subtle and shrewd ways, for the ton'-den' are touchy and undisciplined, and they are quick to claim the equality which is the basis of their association, even to the point of egalitarian mania or egalitarianism. Therefore, it is interesting to note that the regulations, fantastic at first glance, which inflict penalties for performing the most trivial acts are actually very effective; they correct in fun, but they represent a kind of restraint that encourages the development of discipline. Breaking with ordinary life, they tend through repetition to form habits which taken together make
[661] up what we call esprit de corps. In any event, the development which we are about to describe shows conclusively that to maintain and conserve his power the ton'-tigi must exert authority by dissimulation, by persuading those most easily offended that he is subordinating his own acts to their wishes and at the same time appearing to the faint-hearted as an imperious and audacious leader. Furthermore, he must render service to everyone and know how to turn projects and adventures, even the riskiest, into profit for the community.

Since he is the target of the hostility of the elders, who often suffer from the activities of the ton'-den', and since he is constantly envied by some of these same ton'-den' for his success, he acquires the kind of experience which makes him a crafty and sly politician, completely devoid of scruples.

*173 We shall see how Mamari (called Biton) Kouloubali managed to prevail over the tyrannical egalitarianism of the

*173 fla-n-ton' and to rise step by step to absolute despotism.

The son of a poor Bambara farmer, Mamari Kouloubali, was chosen ton'-tigi by his "peers" because he was strong, brave, and lucky (1).

1. According to legend, he was regarded as well-versed in occult lore and dealings with ganii. Legend, however, always attributes remarkable qualities to its heroes.

His fla-n-ton' had two hostile factions, [283] poor Bambara and well-to-do, even rich Soninké, which led to conflict. The Soninké resented a Bambara ton'-tigi, and the Bambara derived a certain amount of satisfaction from humbling the arrogance of the Soninké.

The most famous of the latter, Kassoum Boaré, son of the chief of the Soninké dugu of Duna (1), tried by all possible

1. Better known under the name of Markadougoukou (literally, "great village of the Marka").

means to force Mamari to resign his office of ton'-tigi so that he could replace him. This constant intrigue was aggravated by an increase in the cost of fines. It is true, of course, that fines imposed on ton'-dan' are an accepted source of revenue for the fla-n-ton', but they consist solely of foodstuffs, especially millet which is used to make the native beer called dlo in Bambara. According to the chronicle, however, through the influence of Soninké machinations, very considerable fines were imposed, and Mamari himself was given a fine of 80 (2) head of

2. The figures have only relative significance, of course, and they vary with the different traditionists.

cattle. It was a triumph for Kassoum, because such a fine, far exceeding Mamari's resources, put him in a critical position.

*173 In order to extricate himself from this crisis, Mamari appealed to his sister, Sana-ba, wife of an important chief, Wara Dyara, whose residence was at Dina on the Niger, upstream from Ségou. Sana-ba offered Mamari her gold jewelry to clear himself, but, again at the instigation of the Soninké, the jewelry was refused in order to force Mamari to declare himself insolvent and thus to bring about the separation of the ton'-den'.

The chronicle reveals in detail this internal struggle which was destined to have far-reaching consequences. In the end, the matter was settled by the "elders" who recognized the original cause of all the trouble. They advised the separation of the two antagonistic elements. This advice was followed, and two fla-n-ton' were formed: one composed of the Bambara with Mamari as ton'-tigi, and the other of the Soninké under Kassoum.

Mamari's fla-n-ton' resumed its normal life once more. The ton'-den' met on Monday and Thursday of each week. [294] They prepared their own meals from what they obtained by hunting, but Mamari's mother provided the dlo and mead. In order to reimburse her, each ton'-den' was assessed a donation which, because of its destination, was called di-songo (price of honey).

These festivities and the pillage required to support them angered the "elders," and the fa, Sinè, Mamari's father, ordered his son in the presence of a blacksmith to give up this disgraceful way of life. The young man made use of this threat to persuade his companions to help him build an independent dwelling. This house was erected at Ségou-koro on the spot where the fla-n-ton' usually met and where, later on, was built that part of Mamari's residence -- by then he had become fama of Ségou -- which was called Biton' bion da' (entrance of the house of Biton) (1).

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1. In 1902 I was shown the last vestige of this structure, a square pillar of sun-dried brick in the last stages of disintegration.

From that time on, the fla-n-ton' had a reputation that attracted everyone who was anxious to escape from the overly

*173 strict limitations of native society. First of all there were poor wretches and slaves. Drawn by the good food and the certainty of escaping from the authority of their masters, they abandoned themselves completely to the fla-n-ton' and became its slaves; these were the first ton'-dyon' (slaves of the ton') (2). As is

2. The word ton' will henceforth be used as an abbreviation of fla-n-ton'.

the case with everything that had to do with the ton', Mamari had absolute authority over them. He chose one of them to call the ton'-den' to meetings by blowing a trumpet; this person was called ton'-masa (master of the ton') because his summons was [689] so impressive that anyone who failed to obey was liable to a fine of 20 jugs of beer (dlo). Furthermore, the ton'-masa was a kind of head over his congeners; he transmitted Mamari's orders to them and supervised the execution of them.

The ton'-dyon' were not the only ones who worked for the ton'. Just as the ton'-den' had built a dwelling as ordered by Mamari, they likewise undertook the cultivation of a field of millet.

In short, organized and disciplined, Mamari's ton' prospered. This prosperity aroused the envy and hatred of the [295] fla-n-ton' of the people of Doua, who slyly tried to bring about its downfall. Kassoum first tried to bring about a reconciliation in order to reunite the two ton', but he ran up against the opposition of Mamari, who wanted nothing further to do with these dangerous confreres.

Kassoum changed tactics and encouraged a series of reciprocal invitations between the two ton', which narrowly missed causing serious fights. Mamari, however, managed to keep the situation in hand.

The fields of the ton' produced a fine crop, and Mamari gave half of it to his father, advising him to use it for generous gifts to the fla-n-ton' so as to strengthen his son's influence over his followers. The old man was deeply touched by his son's behavior; he died soon afterward. The chronicler notes that on this occasion Mamari once again managed to extricate himself

*173 from grave danger; his father had been on the point of putting a curse on him for having evaded his authority and for living on the fringes of society.

The ton'-den' paid funeral honors to fa Sine. In accordance with the usual custom, they celebrated for seven days in front of the old man's hut. Then Mamari persuaded them to build a wall enclosing the huts belonging to his father and mother. It was agreed that the part of the enclosure which had been occupied by fa Siné would henceforth be reserved for people from Doukounna passing through Ségou.

An event of the greatest importance then occurred.

After a quarrel with Mamari, Kassoum fined himself 100 jugs of beer (dlo) and swore that he would force Mamari and his followers to come and drink them. All his entreaties, curses, and threats being in vain, at the beginning of the winter season Kassoum and his followers took up a position near Ségou-koro at Ségou Si-do. By all sorts of stratagems they managed to put a stop to the work of Mamari's men in the fields, a common procedure among the natives to bring enemies to heel.

A year passed without any improvement in the situation. Mamari went to Dina to solicit the cooperation of his brother-in-law, Wara Dyara, through the good offices of his sister. He returned to Ségou at the end of three months, discouraged by his lack of success. He was overwhelmed by the complaints of his followers, and at [296] their insistence he asked the people of Doukounna and Banankoroni to try to effect a reconciliation with Kassoum.

Kassoum refused to negotiate, and the quarrels grew more heated. One day Mamari's people made off with the wood used for a stockade by Kassoum's people and took it to Ségou-koro. The next day Kassoum's followers recovered their wood in broad daylight and burned the dwellings of Mamari's ton'. During the ensuing fight one of Kassoum's men was killed.

In order to avenge this murder, Kassoum's father declared that Mamari and ten notables from Doukounna and Banankoroni must be handed over to him. This claim, of course, resulted in endless palavers.

As the native expression puts it, "the words had gone on for eight months" when, after the death of Wara Dyara, his

*173 eldest son appeared with an imposing array of followers to return Sana-ba to her family and to get permission to have her as his own wife. Since the death of his father, Fa Sine, Mamari was the fa over Sana-ba, and he made good use of this circumstance.

Indeed, he succeeded in drawing into his ton' (1) both the

1. That is, he ensured an effective alliance.

new chief of Dina and the Bambara chiefs from the left bank of the Niger who had come to Ségou to pay their respects to the widow of the redoubtable chief of Dina. These new ton'-den' put their armed men at his disposal, and with the support of these additional forces, Mamari accomplished two enterprises which actually mark the real establishment of the clan.

First of all, he repulsed the attacks of the Soninké and, taking the offensive, chased them out of Doua. He had his troops pursue them to Kirango where the fugitives had taken refuge, and his followers laid siege to the place. The hegemony of the Soninké was henceforth overthrown.

Mamari was well aware of the extent of his success, which gave free rein to his ambitions. He realized that to consolidate his authority once and for all he would have to take advantage of this situation, especially since he had powerful allies at his command. Therefore, he resolved to make his ton'-den' recognize him as fa. Since this was a risky operation, he prepared for all possible eventualities.

With the "young men" deliberately kept occupied at Kirango, he [297] summoned to his house the "elders" who were fa over these young men. They came. He said that he wanted to interview them two by two, but they refused, fearing some trick. He asked them to settle near him permanently as a kind of senate, which was a disguised means of keeping them at his disposal. They again refused, being frightened by his insistence and saying that they had to return home to supervise the work in the fields. Mamari realized that their decision was irrevocable and that they would always stand in the way of his projects. He

*173 had foreseen this, and to eliminate this obstacle, he had had a well dug, into which the "elders," were thrown, killed at his order by some of his men who had been posted nearby for the purpose.

Mamari then took another step. He recalled the besiegers from Kirango, and when they arrived, he ordered them to wear the ton'-dyon headdress. When they protested, he told them that their "elders" had been massacred because they opposed his wishes. Overcome by force, the young men were transformed from ton'-den' to ton'-dyon'.

It is said that at this moment Mamari could not resist making a public display of his triumph, and his words show, with emphasis and some temper, what had so far been accomplished: "We shall no longer eat the pistachio nuts of the ton' together, nor shall we drink the beer of the ton' together; I am the son of Allah..."

With this situation in hand, he was no less audacious and successful in accomplishing a new coup. He asked his allies -- who had so successfully aided him in the outcome of the affair -- to leave their armed men with him. They refused. He worked on these warriors so cleverly and made them such tempting promises that the men had hardly reached their homes when they returned to join the ton' and so swelled the number of ton'-dyon.

Henceforth, the fla-n-ton' ceases to exist; transformed, developed, it gives way to the furu-ba (1) (great union, great

1. In the broad sense, furu means "union alliance"; in a narrower sense, "marriage, conjugal union."

association), whose chief, Mamari, is called fama (lord) and whose power rests on the [298] furu-ba-dyon' (slaves of the furu-ba), among whom the ton'-dyon' form a kind of aristocracy.

Of the three elements of the fla-n-ton', ton'-tigi, ton'-den', and ton'-dyon', only two survived after Mamari eliminated the ton'-den'. This elimination did not, however, change the character of the ton'-dyon', who were slaves, not of Mamari himself, but of the association which they formed with him.

*173 Theoretically, Mamari could only direct, supervise, and organize them, but in actual fact he exploited them to his own advantage. Upon the death of the ton'-masa, he decapitated them, in a manner of speaking, when he failed to appoint a replacement from their ranks. He then transformed the ton' into a brotherhood by affiliating the ton'-dyon with cults in which he was concerned and of which he was the grand master; his design was to hold their loyalty through this religious bond. Finally, he attached them to his own community by placing the leaders of the ton'-dyon' under the surveillance of members of that community.

It was at Mamari's death that all the consequences of this absolutism became apparent, an absolutism which attempted to destroy all the principles governing native society. At this point, the ton'-masa played a double role: he first intervened as guardian of Mamari's inheritance, because he had been the latter's personal slave; then he acted as the representative of the ton'-dyon in recognizing their subjection to Mamari's son and personal heir. Thus, the fa of Mamari's community became the fama of the clan.

The tragic death of Dé-koro marked the end of this combination, because the natural family which had provided the fama had died out, or at least the ton'-dyon' thought that it had.

Actually, once they were relieved of the master imposed on them, the ton'-dyon' showed that in their view the egalitarianism of the ton' had only been in eclipse. By the simple expedient of calling themselves "sons of Mamari," they recovered for the ton' all the property that Mamari and his children had usurped. The implacable resistance that prevented any ton'-masa from setting up a new tyranny for his own profit proves that everything tended to revert to the point of departure, that is, to the state of fla-n-ton'.

This, however, was impossible. The imbalance due [299] to the suppression of the ton'-den' was irreparable, because a person's rank cannot be effaced, and the former ton'-den', now ton'-dyon' and hence fallen to a lower estate, could not rise again. But there was something that did not survive, the type of empire which Mamari thought he had definitively established outside and above the ton', first for himself and then for his natural heirs.

*173 Henceforth, the fama in the furu-ba was no more than primus inter pares, just like the ton'-tigi in the old fla-n-ton', taking into consideration the evolution by which the furu-ba developed from the fla-n-ton'.

Ngolo Dyara succeeded only in making the office of fama, thus understood, hereditary for his descendants, just as had been done with many positions of dyon'-kuntigi before his time.

This progressive consolidation of an ever increasing number of high offices and the de facto independence regained by most of the members of the clan resulted in the formation of a society whose members took pride in their ton'-dyon' origins, considered themselves free, and even regarded themselves as free men of rank. This is perhaps the essential role of slavery in these areas, as a channel of social renovation and ethnic fusion.

It is appropriate to close this survey by an analysis of the various components of the clan and an explanation of their functions.

Furu-ba dyon' and Ton'-dyon'

614 567 In the course of time, the organization and function of the furu-ba created by Mamari underwent various modifications.

The essential element of the clan is the ton'-dyon', because after all everything depends on it. We have learned the origin of the ton'-dyon' above. The number of slaves of the furu-ba was increased by the many captives taken in the course of raids, pillaging, and warfare, but the ton'-dyon' is an aristocracy within the furu-ba-dyon' by virtue of seniority and also because some of the characteristics [300] of free men have somehow survived in those of the ton'-dyon' who were originally ton'-den'.

Undoubtedly one of the causes of the unrest that always stirs up the furu-ba is this deep yearning everyone has for freedom. They do not know how to attain it, however, first because they are dominated by an ancient atavism for servitude that burdens all the Sudanese, and also because each man who desires freedom for himself intends to use it to enslave his brothers. These are the confused feelings that give such an equivocal aspect to all the events related in the chronicle.

614
567 The ton'-dyon' of the furu-ba is a kind of person of caste: he cannot cease to be ton'-dyon', and his children will live and die as ton'-dyon'. He is subject to the despotic authority of the fama. For a free man, it is certainly a fall to become a ton'-dyon', but for a slave, on the contrary, it is an improvement in status. Among the ton'-dyon' there are all sorts of people; this was the case in the beginning and has continued to be so as time passed. Although slaves obtained from armed forays were an [727] important element in the totality of the ton'-dyon', there were undoubtedly many men, free but poor, who were glad to join the ton'-dyon' so as to protect themselves from the depredations of these hardly commendable persons and also to gain the right of using the same procedures themselves.

Among the ton'-dyon', therefore, there are people of all races and all conditions; indeed, this is so true that all the dyamu are mingled under this common label.

Within the furu-ba, the ton'-dyon' formed a category apart and always retained the prerogatives which in native society accompany seniority. The ton'-dyon' were the "elders." Prisoners reduced to slavery formed the furu-ba-dyon', properly speaking, and they were grouped in series, each taking its origin from the fama who organized it. There they followed the usual path. Barring favorable circumstances which might allow them to escape the wretchedness of the early days of captivity, they started out as members of the gang of slaves-of-all-work, often considered as a kind of medium of exchange and for that reason called san'-dyon'-u (slaves of exchange). Once they were adopted by a community, a woman acquired the status [301] of wolo-so when she bore a child, while a man might achieve comparable status by gaining the confidence of his masters.

The wolo-so became a dyongoron when he was in a position to send his children to work in his place and to pay an annual fee.

Once he reached the status of wolo-so, the slave became, in actual fact, a person of caste. In principle, he could not be sold, he had the right of ownership, and he could leave property to his children. Indeed, he was often better off than a man who was free but poor.

614 567 The status of this caste-slave carried over to his descendants ad infinitum, even in the case of those persons who rose to the highest positions. Thus, the Dyara of the family of Ngolo Dyara kept the stigma attached to the servile status of their ancestor (1). In practice, the wishes of an all-powerful master

1. See Raffenel, Vol. 1, p. 371.

could change the status of those under his authority since, as we have seen, the fa made the law. However, this arbitrary will did not leave a man without recourse, as we saw in the chronicle in the case of the aforesaid Ngolo in his relations with Mamari. If one could appeal to the good offices of someone close to the fa, it was often possible to make him change his mind.

614 631 The furu-ba dyon' (ton'-dyon' or furu-ba dyon', properly speaking) were under the orders of "chiefs of slaves" (dyon'-kuntigi-u). There are supposed to have been 120 of these chiefdoms under Ma-n-son, according to the words attributed to Tonmassa in the chronicle. According to the same source, the number rose to 140, and then Ma-n-son reduced the number to 60 hereditary posts with authority over a varying number of furu-ba dyon' who were scattered about in the various regions subject to the clan, the whole subservient to the decision of the fama. The chronicle shows us how the fama established or broke up these chiefdoms for the greatest variety of reasons. Whenever he had an enemy who needed watching, an attack to be prepared, a country to be exploited, or a service to be organized, he conscripted men wherever he liked, ordered whole populations to move, and appointed a chief to take command of the enterprise and to carry out his orders, whenever and however he wished.

Among the dyon'-kuntigi there was a hierarchy [302] based on seniority theoretically and also on the importance of the duties; as a result, some of them were great chiefs. One of these, called the ton'-masa, came to be the supreme chief over the ton'-dyon in particular and all the furu-ba dyon' in general. In the fla-n-ton' the ton'-masa had the duty of convening the ton'-den' and of watching the ton'-dyon' to see that they

614 performed the work ordered by the ton'-tigi. The ton'-masa had
631 the same duties in the furu-ba: he made sure that the furu-ba dyon' executed the orders of the fama while acting as intermediary of the dyon'-kuntigi. Since, in short, he represented all the furu-ba dyon', his office gradually tended to put him in opposition to the fama. In the last analysis, what can a fama accomplish if he is opposed by a ton'-masa with all the force of the furu-ba dyon' behind him? That is why Mamari thought he would be able to rely on the devotion of the holder of this high office if he chose him, not from among the furu-ba dyon', but from among his personal slaves. He bought a slave and made him a ton'-masa.

*173 The furu-ba dyon' were first used, though not exclusively
614 as might be thought, for armed forays, variable in scope, from
631 which everyone profited: Mamari, first of all, by increasing prestige and by extending the areas under his sway; the furu-ba dyon', and Mamari too, by adding to their fortunes. The sons of Mamari, obviously anxious to perpetuate their acquired position and not run the risks of brigandage, decided to turn the activity of the furu-ba dyon' toward agriculture. This new orientation gave rise to a crisis, since it was not at all to the taste of one faction which included a large number of furu-ba dyon'; hence there arose internal quarrels, in which one episode was the murder of Dé-koro.

It was during these disturbances that many of the ton'-dyon' and dyon'-kuntigi conceived the idea of dropping out of sight to live independently on the proceeds of the property of the furu-ba entrusted to their case. Successive fama naturally tried, by terrible examples, to bring the rebels to terms, but they succeeded only temporarily by means of force, and when their power declined, these usurpations multiplied. Some of them were sanctioned definitively by the hereditary rights accorded to the 60 posts. [303]

The Fama

614 The second element in the clan was the power of direction, organization, and surveillance, and the holder of this power

614 was called fama (1) (lord).

1. Etymologically, fama or fa-ma, "the powerful," from fa, "power, authority."

Mamari played a dual role: fa of his patriarchal community and at the same time fama of the clan. His successors followed the same practice. However, in order that his duties as fama may be carried out honestly, custom requires the incumbent to turn over the authority and the property of his patriarchal community to his eventual successor, thus retaining a merely honorary fa-ya, so as to avoid confusion whose origin and consequences are easy to imagine.

421 614 In reality, all the property of the furu-ba which the fama held for his use and exploitation always belonged to the clan, and consequently, in principle, was supposed to profit only the clan. When the fama retained his duties as fa, the property of the furu-ba and that of the patriarchal community were likely to be inextricably intermingled, and in the process a considerable fortune would be built up for the community. This wealth, dishonestly acquired, so aroused envy and criticism among the furu-ba dyon' that many of them tried -- sometimes successfully -- to enrich themselves in no less questionable a manner and also sought to lay hands on the estate of the fama because of the clan property taken into it.

In the last analysis, indeed, the only reason for belonging to a clan -- and this is its essential trait in common with the fla-n-ton' -- the possibility of enriching oneself in every way possible; each member of the clan hopes to appropriate as much of the property as possible. On the other hand, each member tries to prevent his brothers from doing likewise, on the pretext of that equality which legally is the basis of the relations between clan members. This hypocrisy dominates the whole life of the clan. It inspires all the acts of the fama in the course of his duties, and it also animates each furu-ba dyon' to such a degree that every one of them aspires to become fama. [304]

614 The fama receives his powers by election, the form of which has changed very little since Mamari's time.

614 *173 Mamari had been elected by the ton'-den'; by means of successive usurpations, whose progress we have shown, he achieved a kind of despotism whose entire gain he was unable to hand down to his descendants, in spite of his wishes.

For his descendants, election followed their installation in office by the ton'-masa, who at the same time publicly announced the assent of the furu-ba-dyon' by a symbolic gesture in which he presented himself to the new fama wearing a loincloth around his neck and put its two ends into the hands of the fama. Under the protection of the deity called ba Kongo-ba, which Mamari had bought in Bendougou, an oath was taken which formed an unbreakable bond between the two elements of the clan.

The election of Tonmassa Dembélé as fama was the result of discussions following the coup d'état which he himself carried out, and it is probable that this election, too, was followed by an oath of loyalty on the part of the dyon'-kuntigi in one or another of the ways already described.

In the case of the successors of Tonmassa Dembélé, the choice of a new chief was preceded by gatherings at which it was announced that the place was vacant and open to the person who could take over Mamari's bow and quiver. Then the election was held, and it was followed by a ritual banquet.

614 *173 782 [776] For this banquet, an ox and a slave were ritually slaughtered in the hut used as a temple for ba Kongo-ba (1), to whom

1. A literal translation of the name was given to me, "Mother of the Great Bush," wherein "mother" is equivalent to goddess." There is an allusion to the ceremony described here in the journal of Isaac (second voyage of Mungo Park), which uses the name Kogno-ba, a variant of Kongo-ba.

the victims were sacrificed. The corpses were then cut into pieces, cooked together, and stirred frequently to make sure that they would be well mixed. A part of this macabre dish was served in the same hut and in the same gourd to the

G14 782 *173 dyon'-kuntigi who had acted as electors. When it was time to eat, they squatted on the ground around the gourd with their backs to it, and in this position and without turning their heads to make a choice, [305] they dipped into the dish and took a piece which might be animal or human. This meal constituted a communion by which those partaking of it were so closely linked that ba Kongo-ba was supposed to kill any one of them who should commit perjury by failing in the loyalty he owed to the man elected.

G14 *173 The choice made was then definitive, and the man elected was put through a test intended to indicate the length of his reign. To make this test, the newly elected chief's throat was wrapped in one of the cotton bands used to make native loin-cloths; two of the bystanders pulled the two ends in opposite directions while the victim feverishly plunged his hands into a gourd containing a mixture of small pebbles and ground baobab leaves. The number of pebbles he managed to pick out in one try was the number of years in his reign. When this number of years had passed, the fama was strangled with the strip of cotton. If his rule had been popular, however, he was left in office until the first complaint was lodged against him.

Such is the tradition. Though it is acceptable in essentials, it is less so in certain details when comparison is made with the chronicle which makes no reference to this uniform death by strangulation or to determining in advance the length of the reign.

One thing that is certain is the oath of loyalty which followed every election and which was also often demanded by the fama during the course of his reign. This oath unquestionably had a sacramental form, characterized by a communion under the patronage of the idol. What the chronicle has to say about the election of Ngolo Dyara shows that the man elected was also required to participate in the oath, thus making it reciprocal. [661] Ngolo managed to avoid taking the oath, and so his electors bore the whole burden of it; this is one of the means by which despots of all lands pave the way for their tyranny.

Relations between the Elements of the Clan

614 596 A study of the clan of Ségou is fortunately clarified by comparison with the organizations which we have discussed earlier: communities and brotherhoods. [306]

The influence of the community and the brotherhood on the clan is clearly shown by the two traits which reveal the consistent effort made by the fama to fuse the clan with his own patriarchy. First, there is the connection of the important ton'-dyon' chiefs and, through them, of all of the furu-dyon' to the fama. This is achieved by placing each of these dyon'-kuntigi under the patronage of an influential member of that patriarchy. Under Mamari and Ngolo, for instance, each of these dyon'-kuntigi was attached to the mother, wife, son, or brother of the fama. The ton'-masa himself asked to be put under the protection of Bakari, son of Mamari.

[794] From another viewpoint, the liaison between the clan and the patriarchy of the fama is made even closer by the participation of the ton'-dyon' in the personal cults of Mamari. Some of them were leading officients of the cults; it was precisely this circumstance that enabled Ngolo to dominate his companions.

It is therefore not too rash to state that under these conditions the clan is merely a kind of extension of the patriarchy of the fama. Besides, the ton'-dyon' always made a point of the bonds which in so many ways linked them to Mamari and which established a real brotherhood between them. That is why, first of all, their cult honored Mamari as though he were an ancestor. Secondly, it was the reason for the mode of succession which was imposed during periods of anarchy, bringing to power the man longest in Mamari's service. Finally, for the same reason, when the fama dies, the ceremonies are exactly like those for a patriarch.

614 There is another consequence: the prosperity, the power, and even the existence of the clan depend essentially on the personal qualities of the fama. When he is equal to the task, the clan is rich and powerful. If he lacks authority or is unable to assign each member a position and a role and keep him there, opposition will at once arise. By its very nature, such opposition inevitably separates the elements that go to make up the clan,

614 and from that moment on everyone seeks to enjoy his freedom and his property for his own profit. The end result is complete disorganization, and only the emergence of a new and enterprising despot can stop it.

614 575 Fundamentally -- and this is a new aspect of the question -- the clan retains the ineradicable imprint of the fla-n-ton' from which it took its origin. The aim has not changed: to assure to each member the [307] largest possible number of those material satisfactions which are so dear to the Bambara. The means likewise remain the same: in spite of appearances to the contrary, it is a type of solidarity based on a strictly egalitarian communalism (1).

1. The innate penchant of the Black for this sort of egalitarian justice is affirmed by legendary episodes wherein an individual is honored and proclaimed chief because he was able to make strictly equal shares. Cf. the legend of Ndyadyane Ndyaye, in Légendes et coutumes sénégalaises [Senegalese Legends and Customs] by Henri Gaden, and the Djide of Djenné, in Contes du Sénégal et du Niger [Tales of the Senegal and Niger] by Zeltner.

[574] The resources of the clan are in every respect analogous to those of the fla-n-ton. Just as the latter profited from the thievery, banditry, and raids of its members, so the clan derives its main resources from successful raids and pillage.

The fla-n-ton' provided for its drinking bouts by means of the di-songo and the crops of its ton'-den' or ton'-dyon'. In the clan, the di-songo persisted for a time and then was replaced by a similar fee, the nyon'-dyu. The work required of the ton'-dyon' was minimal at first during the period of active warfare, but then Dékoro peremptorily sent them into agriculture. Ultimately the furu-ba dyon' came to be primarily agriculturalists.

The foodstuffs of the fla-n-ton' were equally distributed among the ton'-den' by the dyala-tige, under the direction of the ton'-tigi. Within the clan, property is also held in common and

614 Within the clan, property is also held in common and
575 administered by the fama who distributes it among the dyon'-
[421] kuntigi. The latter, in turn, make a further distribution as it is needed.

In the fla-n-ton' the important thing was provisions, material well-being. The same thing is true in the clan. The ton'-dyon' are interested in the profit to be derived from the association, and their feeling for the state is embodied in a very prosaic word, to-da, literally, "the pot of mush." Indeed, this is the principal item on the menue of any fraternal feast of the fla-n-ton'.

614 The property of the clan, as of the fla-n-ton', is theo-
421 retically jointly held by all the members, but since there is a large amount of it, some sort of sharing is necessary, first to consume it and then to reward zeal and fidelity and to encourage emulation and devotion. As a result, the basic egalitarianism is altered. From the clan's beginning it was conceded that a substantial part of the wealth should go to those [308] who had done most to acquire it. Thus, the leader of an expedition had a prior right because of his "luck," and he and his men further received the wherewithal "to repair the rents in their shirts," i.e., to indemnify them for damages suffered during the expedition.

[127] Each warrior kept his own loot, except for unusually valuable things which went to the clan and therefore to the fama who represented it. The part of the loot not taken by individuals was distributed by the fama after abstracting the best and largest part of it for himself.

Strictly speaking, no one actually owned any of this wealth, since all of them, even the fama, merely held it on very precarious terms. Through the caprice of the clan, anyone could [562] have everything taken away, and this applied to persons as well as to things, because the wives and children of the ton'-dyon' were, like himself, the "chattels" of the clan.

The passage of time softened the outward form of these principles; barring abuse or notorious misconduct, each individual had indefinite use of what was allotted to him and handed it on to his descendants. This usufruct, incidentally, was broader than that of our law. In addition, Mamari arrogated to himself a kind of eminent right: he appointed himself -- through usurpation facilitated by his power -- the dispenser of offices and wealth

614 and kept considerable property for himself. For their part, the
421 ton'-dyon', pleased with their lot, carefully kept out of sight so as to be able to enjoy what they had been given and what they had managed to add to it.

These usurpations tended to become stabilized through inheritance, although not without dreadful disturbances.

After Mamari, the office of fama was handed down within
614 his family until the day when the assembly of the ton'-dyon',
+173 dissatisfied with Dékoro's regime, decided to "change the seed," a quaint metaphor for the clan's determination to have a more amenable fama.

The ease with which Dékoro was eliminated (and others after him) also shows that the fama was, and after all could only be, what the ton'-dyon' allowed him to be. This makes it clear that the spirit [309] of the fla-n-ton' never died; the fama merely appeared to be more than primus inter pares at times when his personal influence temporarily made him master of the situation.

At such times, then, he may have governed without the opposition of the majority, but such a period of dominance has always been personal and temporary. In reality, dissension was
578 ever present and was made manifest in fratricidal quarrels, during which the fama seemed to be principally concerned with gratifying personal grudges.

The chronicle shows us that the fama was at the mercy of the ton'-dyon'; without them he could do nothing. The Monday and Thursday meetings, which were a condition of his authority, continued for a long period of time. In any event, this assembly (fun-ba) was the whole of the clan. In ordinary times, the assembly was stimulated by the pleasure of drinking the beer which the fama, like the ton'-tigi before him, always provided. Worship of the clan idols was also the occasion for some of these meetings, accompanied by eating and drinking. The fama invariably made every effort to use these gatherings, usually disorganized, to further his own interests as well as those of the clan.

When Mamari's authority was well established, these meetings no longer played any deliberative or even consultative role, except in the gravest circumstances when the very existence of the clan was at stake. It was logical that the council of the

614 *173 dyon'-kuntigi should replace them; the dyon'-kuntigi always exercised an influence over the ton'-dyon' for whom they acted as spokesmen. Besides it was easy to convene the dyon'-kuntigi, and as their experience increased, they came to be competent and tried collaborators for the fama.

As time went on, however, the council was neglected. The extension of the to-da kept the important dyon'-kuntigi away from Ségou, and as a result the fama became increasingly despotic. He was always sensitive, however, to the influence of his immediate circle, that is, the people of his house (his mother, wives, children, brothers, and other relatives) and [567] especially his familiars (1). The latter constituted a kind of

1. So it was that in his fratricidal quarrel with Nyana-n-Koro, it is clearly apparent that Ma-n-son was guided by the shrewd suggestions of Nzan-fato; in his quarrel with Souleyman, his intimates were his advisers.

privy council in which the leader of the slaves, whether [316] or not he belonged to the ton'-dyon', played an important role. Ordinarily these familiars were of lowly birth: people of caste or domestic servants in the house of the fama. Deeply involved in their master's life, they were at the root of the intrigues surrounding him.

The fama realized that his authority was deprived of its strength when he lost contact with the ton'-dyon', because a clan languishes almost to the point of extinction when those who compose it lose touch with one another. Therefore, the fama would convene the assembly, not, as in the past, in order to learn its wishes, but rather to request or even require from it a solemn affirmation of loyalty before the idols. In any case, the assembly always met at least once a year to renew the oath of religious faith and to admit the "young men."

[578] The assembly took an effective role only at the election of a new fama, and it is plain that over the years this power of

614 consultation likewise underwent changes. In the beginning there
*173 was no great amount of dissension within the furu-ba, but gradu-
578 ally, as the importance of the clan grew and the wealth of influ-ential members increased, divergent opinions arose, held by strong and determined partisans. Then the dyon'-kuntigi were opposed among themselves, and the recurrent periods of anarchy bear witness to the consequences of these internal quarrels.

Organization of the Clan

614 The army. The office of fama is dominated by the need
721 to ensure the prosperity of the clan since, in theory, the clan's only reason for existence is that of procuring for its members as many material satisfactions as possible.

The usual way to make a fortune among these people was through armed pillage. When a fama was elected, the bow and quiver symbolized the clan's activity, and according to the reasoning of Kanou-ba-nyouma, it was essential that the arrows should hit someone. Thus, it was necessary to go to war. That was the way to acquire slaves, by means of which the great -- and everyone aspired to be such -- satisfied their desires. That is why the essential organization in the clan was the armed force. [311]

614 This organization was based on the distribution of the
701 slaves among chiefdoms (dyon'-kuntigi-ya). Observed as a whole, the army was composed of a certain number of sections called sen' (literally, "foot"). This was not a specific unit, but merely the name used to designate an organized group under the leadership of a chief. Each sen' had a variable number of men. The bolo (literally, "arm") was a "band" made up of a likewise variable number of sen' and commanded by an important chief.

614 When the army was drawn up for battle, it faced the
726 enemy with a central mass called disi (literally, "chest") made up of the corps of sofa, flanked on the right and the left by bolo called, respectively, kini-n-bolo (right arm) and numa-n-bolo (left arm) (1). Each of these bolo were made up of furu-ba dyon'

1. Note this anthropomorphism applied to the army, which thus included head, arm, feet, chest.

614 726 surrounded by ton'-dyon'. Behind the disi there was a special reserve composed only of ton'-dyon'; this was the ton'-koro-bolo.

The fama himself designated the leader (keli-tigi) of all 614 701 the expeditions of war. This might be one of the dyon'-kuntigi or some member of the community of the fama; sometimes the fama himself might take command.

The personal protection of the fama was the duty of the corps of sofa. In principle, considering the etymology of the name, the sofa were supposed to take care of the horses; this does not mean that they were necessarily horsemen or even grooms. The youngest served as pages and sometimes as grooms; the older ones were confidential aides to whom the fama entrusted missions. The sofa constituted one part -- and by no means the least important -- of what might be called the household of the fama: an assemblage of persons employed for various duties under the immediate authority of the fama.

[727] They were recruited from young prisoners taken in raids and other operations of war.

When the fama led an expedition which was engaged for some time or when he took part in some important affair, he liked to arrange and to preside over the soli of the boys of the conquered people and to have one or more of his many children take part. [312] This was a means of assuring himself of the devotion, generally regarded as unfailing, of these soli-ma whose "birth" into man's estate he had honored and who, by virtue of the ceremony itself, were thus linked to some of his own children. Mostly these young men would then swell the ranks of the sofa.

This army, which might be said to be a regular army, theoretically received everything it needed from the fama: mounts, equipment, weapons, ammunition, etc. This justified the very considerable share of booty kept by the fama himself; he was thus repaid for what he had furnished, was provided with resources needed to replace what had been destroyed, and finally, was able to add to the store of equipment needed to make war. There was also the special need to increase the clan's treasury with a view to all possible eventualities.

The army was augmented by allied or volunteer contingents. The allies had a solemn agreement with the clan, based on a

614 religious and reciprocal oath. Their contribution entitled them
701 to a share of the booty. Volunteers, who enlisted for an engagement or a whole campaign, came in under conditions settled in advance.

The fama furnished the allies, just as he did the volunteers, with whatever they needed and deducted the amount from their share of the loot. Sometimes a third party, not involved in the expedition, provided mounts, equipment, and weapons for the enterprise in exchange for a prearranged reward.

In short, armed pillage was a business directed by the fama, who could admit interested participants if he so desired. If the operation were successful, the clan gained predominance over
[727] the conquered regions, which the fama then exploited as he saw fit. The booty was the first result of the enterprise, and it served him to pay the expenses incurred in the affair and to swell the treasury of the clan.

This explains why the clan's army, for a consideration, hired itself out to anyone who asked for support, as an ally, as a mercenary force, or in any other capacity. The army might simply intervene in a quarrel of its own accord when there seemed to be profit to be gained (1). [313]

1. See below how the fama of Ségou lent his support to a marabout of Sous. The Bambara also intervened on numerous occasions in the internal quarrels of Khasso, Boundou, Fouta, etc. Their role as mercenaries is clearly shown in the Tarikh es Soudan.

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701 The ton'-dyon' were distinguished by a special hair ar-
569 rangement. Their heads were completely shaved except for three
[302] tufts of hair which formed two braids on the crown of the head and one at the nape of the neck.

The slaves of the household of the fama could be recognized by their well-known tattoo (1) which consisted of three

[304]

1. In general, it is risky to depend

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incautiously on tattooing as a distinguishing mark of race or even of rank; the tattoo described here has not only been used by people of various origins, but has even been appropriated by all kinds of people as a form of snobbishness.

parallel cuts from temple to lower jaw on either side of the face. Furthermore, these people borrowed the dyamu of the fama (Koulouhali, Dyara, etc.), just as certain servants in some of the French provinces are called by their master's name because they are members of the household bearing that name.

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The elite troops (sofa, ton'-dyon', etc.) were armed with axes (sukala) (2). Important chiefs also had axes, the insignia of

2. An instrument's name derived from suka, a variant of sua, meaning "to pierce." The men armed with axes were, in fact, assigned the special task of "making a breach" in the wall inclosing the settlement under attack.

command, sometimes made of precious metal, such as copper or silver. The axe carried by the fama was made of gold and enchased (3).

3. The chronicle relates that Tonmassa, after murdering Dékoro, carried off the golden axe, the symbol of supreme command.

The spear (tama) was often regarded as a weapon of distinction also. The ordinary warriors were armed with bows (kala) and arrows (bimye), the latter usually poisoned.

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Guns (marfa) gradually came into use, imported by native traders (Dyula). The chronicle claims that the first firearms were introduced among the people of Ségou" in Mamari's time by an army from Kong and that these guns were of the blunderbuss type.

614 701 411 Chiefs and other notables carried a short sabre (m-pan) slung from their shoulders. These were probably Turkish in origin and were largely ceremonial weapons.

614 714 The troops wore no specific uniform. Only a few of the more important personages were recognizable by certain insignia, and it sometimes happened that certain individuals were honored by distinguishing marks. The chronicle tells us that Mamari [314] had Ngolo Dyara outfitted in red, a uniform particularly desired. Likewise, he gave Tonmassa a pair of trousers that were unusually wide and consequently attracted everyone's attention.

534 614 701 Drummers (dunu) and trumpeters (buru) made up a military clique which also included men who played xylophones (bala) and various accessory instruments, especially bells (tana, veleni, etc.), and gourds half-filled with pebbles or grain.

The drum beaten to sound a rally, which was, therefore, in a manner of speaking, the announcer of war, was the tabala. The cylinder, bowl-shaped and usually made of wood or sometimes pottery, was covered with an ox-hide, often untanned, which was stretched by thongs tied under the drum. In theory, [766] this drumhead was always changed at the death of a fama, when the skin was broken as a sign of mourning (1), and was replaced

1. It should be noted that the destruction of the drumhead is comparable with the killing of the dead chief's dog and the presentation of a dead chicken to his relatives. All these are obviously "intentional breaks."

by the hide of the ox sacrificed in honor of the deceased. The tabala was carried horizontally between two men by means of leather grips and a third individual beat it by means of a ball attached to his wrist by a leather thong.

Other drums were of varying sizes and shapes. Some were carried under the arm (dunkan') or slung from the shoulder (tama); others, mounted on three feet (dange), presented a horizontal

534 beating surface. The most highly regarded was the denu-ba;
614 made of a hollowed cylindrical trunk with fairly thick walls,
701 the denu-ba is sometimes more than a meter high, with its lower third often slightly tapered with an adze. The drumhead is made of strong hide, reinforced in the center by a patch of leather sewed to it and stretched on pegs driven into the sides of the drum a few centimeters below the upper edge. When it is to be played, the drum is inclined on a fork that supports it. The drummer uses a kind of wooden hook, cleverly curved for elasticity and provided at one end [315] with a rounded part, often formed by a swelling contrived for the purpose or at other times made of a leather ball. The drummer's free hand provides the syncopation.

In certain cases, two denu-ba are used together; the drummer strikes them in such a way as to obtain a variety of sounds to form the basis for conventional harmony. Thus, the soldiers not only were trained to obey appropriate flourishes, but also were kept in touch with distant battalions by means of the drums. When it was skillfully played, the denu-ba made it possi-
[202] ble to transmit information for considerable distances, because other drummers would retransmit it in turn. That is why it has
[718] been said that the denu-ba can talk and no doubt why it was so highly regarded by the ton'-dyon' that they considered it an oracle and honored the god who spoke through the drum by making the denu-ba the boli of this god. Hence, human victims came to
[782] be sacrificed to the drums of the ton'-dyon', especially under Ngolo, according to the chronicle.

[237] Trumpets (buru) were formerly made of ivory. The Tedzkiret speaks of the ivory trumpets used by a certain Bambara named Maro, and Mage relates that Ahmadou, Sultan of Ségou, gave the Bambara their ivory trumpets on the occasion of the Moslem festival.

[237] These ivory trumpets, however, have disappeared, no doubt carried off by traders. Trumpets made of horn, which were used concurrently with the ivory instruments, have been substituted for them. The horns of the large antelope are much in demand for this purpose. An opening is made a few centimeters from the pointed end, and the trumpeter makes the sound through this opening. The only result is a loud but monotonous noise.

534 The xylophone (bala) consists of a table made of strips
614 of hardwood, with a gourd under each strip, like a resonator;
701 the size of each gourd depends on the note desired. A section of the gourd is stopped by the vibrating surface which is a white material very closely woven like a cobweb. When it is played well, the bala produces various tunes, but they seem very thin compared to the noise of the drums and the shrieking of the trumpets. [316]

The accessory bells are of no particular interest.

538 No expedition of any consequence ever set out without a
701 griot (dyeli) (1). The griot has acquired a deplorable reputation

1. See above, pp. et seq., on the dyeli.

because of the fact that too often he uses his fluency to exploit the rich and powerful. This should not hide the fact, however, that the griot has often played a role not lacking in grandeur. In addition to being the official archivist of one or more families, he was also, in the native sense, a kind of epic bard who told his
[534] tales in song, accompanying himself on a stringed instrument similar to a guitar or a rudimentary harp. When told by him, the traditions, involved with those miracles so dear to the native, had something of the quality of our medieval epics. In that respect, at least, the griot truly deserved his title of dyeli (master).

Unfortunately, however, being reduced to earning his keep by making use of his information, he resorted to slander and calumny. This made him so much to be feared that in order to buy his silence the victims despoiled themselves for his benefit, as did those whom he intoxicated with base flattery.

538 In the army the griot stirred and encouraged the brave
701 men. On the eve of an important engagement or shortly before it,
726 a large assembly customarily was held, and roused by the epic poems of the griot no less than by the war dances and copious libations, the warriors promised under oath to perform such and such acts of great courage. It was then the duty of the griot to take public note, so to speak, of this commitment and later,

538 when the action had occurred, to celebrate the glory of its
701 author. If, however, events showed that there had been mere
726 bravado, the griot was then expected to stigmatize the braggart's cowardice -- something he never failed to do, since he found it just as profitable as to celebrate the glory of a hero.

At a critical hour when the army threatened to yield to the baser instincts engendered by rout, panic, and defeat, the griot often had the fortunate ability to arouse failing courage, sometimes [317] with cutting sarcasm, sometimes by exalting the lofty achievements of the ancestors, sometimes by setting forth in a tragic light the lot of the defeated. The chronicle shows him in this role when Ma-n-son, held in check by the stubborn resistance of Tyitya, sees himself -- final disgrace -- abandoned by his wives who have decided to return to Ségou. All through the night the griot sang battle songs, and at dawn the terrible assault proved that the army had recovered its spirit.

This handler of words was undoubtedly a formidable "master." He was said to know words that kill, since he was aware of the actions dominating every person's life. When Ma-n-son's twelve wives came in a body and told him that they had resolved to return without him to Ségou because they were all the more homesick when they felt that defeat was at hand, he ordered them to repeat their words before the griot whom he had summoned. With their action thus publicly noted, he gave them leave to depart, knowing that he would be able to avenge himself for their desertion whenever he decided to do so.

The songs of the griot, retold and repeated by the warriors and the people, gave memorable actions ineffaceable lineaments. The chronicle tells us that when the expedition against Dina was undertaken, the griot improvised the song which begins: "In the shade of the bushy kaminya tree, the hen cannot tell a grain of millet from a grain of sand." This meant that, in the confusion of battle, a warrior can make no distinctions. In fact, the country was completely laid waste during this expedition, and the booty was so abundant that forever after the griot had only to sing this song to arouse the warlike ardor of the ton'-dyon'.

538 A man of high rank is always accompanied by his griot,
814 who is both a confidant and a mere factotum. It is true, of course,

538 814 that the griot is often a wretched character, an insignificant parasite living at the expense of everyone. There are those among them, however, who carry out their duties as archivist very faithfully and who are sincerely devoted to their masters, great and generous lords in the native fashion whose interests and reputations such griot ably defend.

It is griot of this last type who transmit the reliable historical tradition from which we have borrowed the foregoing accounts. There [318] is no doubt that these griot, true "masters" (dyeli) of historical traditions, have played a considerable role in native society. Therefore their words should never be passed over lightly, although obviously they should be subjected to judicious criticism.

The To-da

614 631 In origin, evolution, and contingencies, the clan developed from the social bases already studied, community and brotherhood, of which it is, in the last analysis, only an amalgamation. As a result, its various manifestations are similar to those of these institutions, even though possessing its own peculiarities.

One of the most characteristic features of the clan is the to-da, which was the familiar term used by members of the clan for the region in which they lived. The word literally means "the pot of mush" and alludes to the essential element in the corporate [539] banquets of the fla-n-ton'. As the saying goes: "furu-ba to, to kadi, na ka ko, (at the corporate meal the mush is good and the sauce is bad.")

The to-da originally was limited to Ségou-koro and its immediate environs, i.e., the small number of villages affiliated with the ton' either voluntarily or by force. It progressively extended its sway along the Niger: first on the right bank as far as Kirango; later almost to Dina; finally it extended its influence over a broad area on both sides of the river from Kan ga-ba to Timbuktu.

This territory was organized in various ways. The key region ran along the Niger from Dina to Kirango, and the sector

614 between Ségou-koro and Kirango was the area under what we
631 would call direct administration, because this zone was occupied substantially by the fama, his community, and his ton'-dyon'.

614 Ségou-koro, which had witnessed the birth and the de-
794 velopment of the clan, had remained Mamari's capital; he preferred to live there, and he had installed the protective idols of the clan there. Thus it was, so to speak, the seat of the brotherhood, whose four principal idols continued to be known under the
778 names of ba Kongo-ba, na n-Golo ko, Nye-dinge-dun', and
776 Kolo-koloni. [319]

The fama was the high priest, and the other officiants of the cult were chosen from among the ton'-dyon'; that is why Ngolo Dyara was dye-n-fa. Any follower of Mamari or his successors was affiliated with the cult of these idols. The adepts who lived far from Ségou-koro founded branches which in certain ways were so dependent on the capital that Ségou-koro was for a long time regarded as a holy city.

We have no detailed knowledge concerning the cult of these important idols; we only know that in general they did not differ greatly from what we have already said about the nyana of the boli. The annual festival was exceptionally solemn and brought the faithful from even quite distant regions. The fama, of course, presided over the ceremony which involved certain essential rites: a renewal of religious faith, the reception of new
614 members, and an oath of loyalty to the fama.
794 The four deities mentioned above were not the only ones
776 in the Bambara pantheon at Ségou (1); others were added, some

1. In Les Bambara [The Bambara], Father Henry mentions, in addition to ba Kongo-ba and na-n-Golo-ko, two other idols, Kuantara and Safolo.

bought and others invented out of the extravagant faith of the ton'-dyon'. Among the latter should no doubt be included the drums of the ton'-dyon', which are mentioned several times in the accounts and which are presented always in a very bloodthirsty light. Ngolo sacrificed his most hated enemies to the drum-idols,

beginning with his relatives, to avenge his hatred toward them for selling him into slavery. It seems likely that the establishment of these ferocious deities may well date from the time of this despot and perhaps was due to his personal initiative.

The "people of Ségou" also held in high esteem the deities of the people they conquered. Indeed, there is no doubt that they constituted the most precious part of the booty of war. The Toucouleur [Tukolor] relate that when they entered Ségou-Sikoro they found an idol in chains; it was the protective deity of a group of the Nono-n-kobe people of the cliff of Bandiagara. With the evident intention of keeping this conquered people forever enslaved, the Bambara had captured their god and were having its cult observed by its own priest, kept captive likewise for the purpose (2). [320]

2. See Desplagnes, Le plateau central nigérien [The Nigerian Central Plateau], p. 175.

The chronicle shows that the Komo also figured in the Ségou pantheon, and if one refers to what we have said about this brotherhood, he will understand the important role it played in the to-da since the fama himself acted as Komo-tigi.

There is absolutely no doubt that cannibalism was in favor on certain definite occasions and, according to appropriate ritual, especially, at the time of the election of a fama. It is obvious, in any case, that under the despotic rule of the clan human life had little value. The atrocities of Dékoro, the passiveness of his victims, the help given him in the execution of his worst crimes by the very people who were directly threatened -- these are not isolated cases. They are indicative of the basic Sudanese temperament in general, which, if not innate, at least is affected by a very ancient atavism. It is because this kind of arbitrary command over the lives of individuals has been practiced for so many centuries that the Bambara often remain impassive in the face of death. They consider its unforeseen occurrence, even when sudden and the result of man's

614 794 761 own action, as a possible daily eventuality which should cause no surprise.

The practice of this implacable ferocity must also be considered the natural source of that kind of burning faith, as intransigent as it is horrible in our eyes, which is capable of nullifying all the feelings of affection that we regard as natural. When Ngolo realized that he had aroused dangerous ambitions in his son Ntyi, he decided that he could not escape the danger he himself had created except by a sacrifice in keeping with the contingency, and with his own hand and without hesitation, he sacrificed Ntyi's son, his own grandson.

Stubborn Bambara are often heard to say: "You may kill me; I will not yield." Tyitya's resistance shows that this is no idle boast; this same affair also shows the aspiration toward equality, so basic in the Bambara, which makes it impossible for him to bow before his fellows. Another example of the same quality is to be seen in the resistance of the "elders" whom Mamari, even he, could subdue only by murder.

794 614 769 To complete the description of the somewhat mystical features of the clan of "those of Ségou," let us recall that after [321] Mamari's death he was honored by a cult: on the part of his natural descendants because he had been their fa; on the part of the people of the clan because he had been fama; and finally, on the part of the faithful of the idols' cult because he had been the high priest. Under this aegis there was a fusion of sorts of all the people who recognized mutual bonds because they were all spiritual sons of Mamari. This relationship was the excuse used by the ton'-dyon' when they usurped supreme power, and the right of the leaders of the ton'-dyon' to succeed to the office of fama was in fact settled by the expedient of treating this relationship as though it were true descent. This cult took its characteristics from the cult of the idols. When Tonmassa began his duties [782] as high priest, his first act was to honor the manes of Mamari, and the offering was the same as that always made to ba Kongo-ba when a new fama was elected: a man and an ox.

614 794 Such are some of the characteristics of the faith that united the "people of Ségou" by ties which, without metaphor, can be called bloody. It is true, of course, that the clan's

614 leading men made use of the cults to realize their ambitious
794 designs and to gratify their personal hatreds. From that point of view it can indeed be said that religion was a means of domination. It would be altogether too simple, however, to say that these cults had no other reason for existence than to maintain terror as the basis of the power of the fama. Any such facile opinion should be discarded, because the facts should be evaluated, not from the outside, but rather in the native milieu. It then certainly appears possible that they are of the same order as the many phenomena already examined.

This powerful religious focus animated the whole clan. Impetus, direction and control belonged to the fama, whose role was conditioned, as we have seen, by the attitudes of the furu-ba dyon' and especially of the ton'-dyon', both of which were represented by the dyon'-kuntigi who were, in a sense, their agents. Was it not inevitable that there should be a kind of spiritual current, supposedly emanating from the idols, which inspired the fama and the furu-ba dyon' and then returned to the idols in the form of a cult? How could such a constant preoccupation with the supernatural not make a deep impression? This preoccupation haunts the natives everywhere and always, [322] and they express it in ways that are in perfect harmony with their world, however ridiculous they may appear to European logic and reason.

614 The Ségou area acquired special importance because of
621 the presence of the community of the fama, which settled there under remarkable circumstances.

It is usual in any important community for the first-born son to be set apart. Destined to succeed the fa upon his death, he is prepared for his future responsibilities by being given the management of a portion of the joint property. As the fa grows older, the role and the importance of this eldest son increase.

*173 When a community is sufficiently wealthy, a privileged
614 position is likewise given to the eldest sons of the other wives of the fa, because he is always forced to distribute favors equally among his various wives whose jealousy may have far-reaching effects. Upon the death of a fa, many difficulties arise, stemming from his all too obvious preferences. An example of this was the

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fratricidal warfare that broke out when Ngolo Dyara died. Nyana-n-koro, the son of a wife who was free and also a favorite, had been favored by the fa during his lifetime. He therefore was not willing to take second place to Ma-n-son, whose mother was the eldest wife but had been a slave.

Since the community of Ségou had become exceedingly rich by appropriating the property of the clan, which the fama legally was supposed only to manage all the first-born sons of the successive fama were generously endowed, and their private residences were to be found, one after the other, along the banks of the Niger or near it.

So it was that, of Ngolo Dyara's sons, Ntyi lived at Bamabougou, Ma-n-son at Pébala, Nyana-n-koro at Ségou-koro, Péné Mamourou at Ségou-bougou, Ba at Bla, Séri at Sofinna, Dyon-kelé at Kirango, etc.

Ma-n-son's sons lived as follows: Da at Pébala, then at Bamabougou; Tyéfolo at Koké; Ben at Kirango; Nyéné-m-ba at Oftala; Sibiri at Diani; Fissa at Nango, etc.

A further result of these usurpations was that appanages were set up to benefit other relatives of the fama, for instance, Dyidi, a brother of the fama Ngolo Dyara, was granted [323] all the territory between Dougou-fin and Dyam-bougou (more than 600 villages) (1).

1. According to the chronicle.

Finally, Mamari and the other fama after him were shrewd enough to place the principal dyon'-kuntigi under the control of various members of their respective communities: mothers, wives, sons, brothers, etc. Mamari's mother, Sanou Saro, had authority over the dyon'-kuntigi Na-n-koro-ba-n-Zangné; the head of the sofa, Kolé, and Allah-n-siré were dependents of Mamari's wife, the mother of his eldest son, Ba-dyi; Tonmassa was a dependent of his son Bakari.

By this means, the closest and deepest kind of solidarity developed between the family of the fama and the people of the clan. This fact, added to the spiritual solidarity which

*173 we have just noted, would have formed an unbreakable bloc
614 if both elements had not been affected by the ferment of dissociation referred to in the course of this study.

The to-da derived the larger portion of its prosperity from
[487] the Niger. Communication and transport could most easily be maintained along this artery, and it was the need to make the greatest possible use of the river that brought about the organization of the Somono.

Etymologically, the word Somono simply means "fisher-
[101] man." Like any trade practiced exclusively, professional fish-
[564] ing involves a certain loss of standing, and that is why the Somono are said to be people of caste. This status is especially due to the supremacy of the clan over the Somono, without whom it could not have exploited the river.

After using force to annex them, Mamari added to their
614 number by assigning some of the furu-ba dyon' to the group, so
564 that the Somono were soon closely dependent on the furu-ba.
*173 At the orders of the fama and his agents, they were required to
[505] maintain ferry service across the river, to provide river transport in both directions, and to pay a fee in kind on their catch, with the understanding that they could continue to live according to the traditional Somono customs.

In return, the Somono were under the protection of the clan and their leaders benefitted from the generosity of the fama. They would occasionally be given a share of booty. [324]

Little by little, the few original Somono families were lost in the flood of newcomers. These included: the furu-ba dyon' who had become Somono on orders from the fama; people of diverse origins who had adopted Somono status of their own accord because they found it better than their own; and finally, the children of both, who were Somono by birth.

It was likewise the exploitation of the property of the
[233] to-da that brought about a similar organization of the shepherds, or Peul. Let us first note that this term has no ethnic significance; it designates all who raise or watch over animals as a regular and professional occupation. Here, too, there is a kind of loss of standing, since a working shepherd could hardly do without a sponsor and must attach himself to a master. This is the case for

614 564 *173 all who exercise a calling, and that is why the Bambara call a Peul "fula fantan' (weak Peul)" (1), to indicate that he is in

1. See in Chapter 7 below [not translated] how this expression is used as an insult in the quarrel between Ma-n-son and Bacari Dyan.

potestate.

In order to ensure the greatest return from the clan's flocks, Mamari had recourse to the Peul, just as when he wanted to exploit the Niger, he had taken over the Somono. That is how Peul settlements came to be established, called furu-ba fla-u, "Peul of the furu-ba." These are free people, but they are required to serve the clan. The ranks of these first Peul were increased by the arbitrary assignment of some of the furu-ba dyon'; some pastoralists by choice joined them; and the children of both groups were furu-ba fla-a by birth. This went on until there were enough of them for Ngolo Dyara to set up twelve Peul encampments. Mamari divided them into two tribes: the Dyana (people of Dyan), and the Bonguéna (people of Bongué). The furu-ba fla-u speak Bambara, and very few of them can claim to be Peul in ethnic origin. [563]

In the case of the Somono and the Peul, we have seen how the clan exploits the populace, for any people on which the clan forces its authority is treated in the same way. The clan requires a contribution, according to the means of livelihood from each of the population groups it assimilates. The system used for the fishermen and the shepherds was likewise used for the agriculturalists. [325]

In this case, too, the furu-ba dyon' were blended with the rural peoples. Although they were relegated to special villages, this isolation never prevented them from maintaining close relations with the people in the surrounding areas.

Here again, there were agriculturalists by adoption. Through time heredity consolidated the close union between these people of the agricultural caste and the clan.

2: Monteil--358 G-5 (1902-1923) 1924 FA8 Bambara FA8

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Wherever there was need for it, the clan was represented by agents to guard its interests. Theoretically, these agents did not interfere in purely local matters; their duty was to avert or repress hostile acts, to ensure the payment of fees, and to see that the orders of the fama were carried out. Actually, however, claiming that the fulfillment of their mission required it, they modified everything to the advantage of the clan since they had the authority to do so.

They brought the weak under the aegis of the clan and also people of caste who were always in search of a powerful and generous master. They furthered the projects of the ambitious so long as they were in harmony with the policy of the clan. They transformed tributaries into allies and, in short, at all times assisted in furnishing large contingents for the clan.

Furthermore, many villages chose the "people of Ségon" as their chiefs, either of their own volition in order to acquire the good will of the fama or under open or dissimulated pressure. In this way, extensive regions near Ségou and even at some distance were incorporated.

Thus one can see how the fame of the power and strength of the fama spread far and wide, carried also by the Dyula, who were emissaries constantly on the move, and more generally by traders of every race and origin who came to Ségou to do business.

That is why a marabout of Sous, Ali ben Haidara, requested Mamari's aid when he was attacked in his mosque by Sultan Er Rechid. After Mamari had received two Spanish or Portuguese women from Ali, he permitted him to settle at Timbuktu and refused to turn him over to Er Rechid, who had dispatched troops to capture him (1). [326]

1. Tradition has it that, after a stay of several months, Ali returned to Sous, taking several thousand Blacks with him to attack Er Rechid. The latter had died in the meantime, so Ali released his mercenaries and they were rehired by Ismaïl, the new sultan. They are said to have formed the corps of the Abid, Negro soldiers especially assigned to guard the Sultan of Morocco.

2: Monteil--359 G-5 (1902-1923) 1924 FA8 Bambara FA8

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Ngolo Dyara's fame spread in the same way, even reaching Morocco. Jackson, the English consul at Mogador in 1800, speaks of him, under the corrupted name of Wooloo, as ruling over Djenné and Timbuktu.

3. Clan of the Massa-si or the "People of Kaarta"

In sum, this clan does not differ essentially from that of the people of Ségou, whose origin, development, and organization we have just described. Some of the characteristics peculiar to it are as follows.

Its origin is marked by some alliances, by fraternization, and oath or marriage, which involved Sounsan or Massa Kouloubali and Fa Siné Dyara, some Taracré, and some Konaré. This small nucleus existed and prospered through banditry, and the proceeds were distributed in accordance with agreements among the participants.

Then the Kouloubali acquired a superior position by confiscating a caravan of slaves. They bound these slaves by oath and thus founded a kind of association (ton') in which the following elements can be discerned.

1. The fama, chosen from the Kouloubali-Massa-si family; the members of that family and their allies, among whom Fa Siné Dyara and his descendants held the highest position: Kasi Konaré and his descendants.

2. The ton'-dyon', that group of people who gave up their freedom to benefit the clan.

3. The clan does not seek territorial conquests, but rather seeks to subjugate peoples so as to derive the greatest possible profit from them, either by enslaving them or by forcing them to make various kinds of payments, hence the other element of the clan, the tributaries.

The historical account tells us that the region occupied or controlled by the members of the clan of the Massa-si was virtually always undergoing change and that the capital, too, was moved as circumstances required. [327] All of this shows the true nature of this organism; it was a parasite.

*173 In principle, it did not interfere with anything that was
64 not contrary to its own interests, and within those limits it allowed the conquered peoples to live as they pleased. In regions under its control, however, its operations were not without influence, and it employed measures analogous in every way to those applied by the clan of Ségou.

Organization and Operation

766 The following description of the funeral of a Massa-si
64 fama and the installation ceremonies for his successor will show us the principal customs and important personages in action.

768 When the fama dies, the leader of the slaves assumes command of the royal household; he has all the doors watched and summons the wives of the deceased and takes their jewels and any other objects of value. He places all the valuables in a hut, and he himself keeps the key.

While this is going on, the war drums (tabala) are broken, and the sofa are dispatched to inform members of the family.

When the heir presumptive arrives, the leader of the slaves shows him the body of the deceased, so he can officially identify it, and the collection of valuables so he will know that they have not disappeared. The sofa are then sent to the capital to announce the death of the fama in order that everyone will bring an offering for the funeral ceremonies. The gifts of food will be used for the funeral banquets, and the other gifts (silver, horses, fabrics, etc.) will become part of the royal treasure, even though they are theoretically supposed to be used as alms for the poor.

The body is washed, wrapped in a shroud, and then buried. Burial usually takes place within the royal house, at the place where the deceased liked to sit. If he is interred in the floor of a hut, the hut is abandoned after its door has been walled up.

The door of the central redoubt (tata) is also walled up, and a new opening is made.

766 614 White oxen are sacrificed on the tomb; their hides are used to make new drumheads for the tabala, and the meat [328] is offered to the manes of the deceased and then distributed among members of the family, allies, familiars, etc. The women wail, weep, and sing the praises of the deceased in company with the people of caste who organize everything. Outside, [786] banquets and virtual orgies, complete with noisy dances and songs, are organized in honor of the deceased.

This ceremony goes on for seven days.

614 At the close of this period, the new fama is publicly proclaimed. For this purpose, the leader of the slaves has the walled-up door of the tata reopened, and the whole company assembles in the large open area in front of the house of the fama. Those present include the newly elected fama, the members of the family of the Massa-si, allies, tributaries, heads of the ton'-dyon', and the sofa.

[769 782] An ox has been sacrificed and offered to the manes of the defunct. Its hide is stretched in the center of an open area surrounded by the crowd, and on it is spread out the sheepskin, adorned with precious amulets, which has long served as a rug for the fama of the Massa-si. Other precious family relics include [301] the scarlet cap adorned with amulets, twists of gold for the ears, and heavy silver bracelets.

The representative of the family of Kassi Konaré seats the newly elected fama on the sheepskin, puts the scarlet cap on his head, and adorns him with the gold earrings and silver bracelets. Then he makes a speech to the new fama, outlining the policies followed by his deceased predecessor and enumerating the desiderata of the people of the clan.

[567] At this point the leader of the slaves prostrates himself before the new fama and places himself in his hands to show that all the ton'-dyon' are loyal to him. He then presents individually the principal groups of slaves, tributaries, etc.

Another ceremony brings the new fama, prominent Massa-si, their allies, the principal leaders of the slaves, and the tributaries to the wood sacred to the protective idol of the clan, where a reciprocal oath of loyalty is taken. A ritual communion follows.

614 Lengthy and noisy festivities, where dlo (millet beer) flows freely, food is abundant, and songs and dances are performed, [329] mark the general rejoicing. They last for seven days, but forty days must elapse before the new fama is deemed definitively installed.

In theory, the new fama must turn over the management of his own community to his heir presumptive. In fact, however, this retirement is usually fictitious. The fama intermingles his [421] own property and the property he administers for the clan to such an extent that, in the last analysis, the Massa-si and everything dependent on them -- persons and things -- are an inherent and inseparable part of the clan. Under the cover of this confusion, the general and determined tendency of all the fama was to work unceasingly at confiscation from the clan for the benefit of the community of the Massa-si. At least they have managed to make their office absolutely hereditary, with no possibility of competition, and as a result the election is merely the public recognition as fama of whatever individual is considered by the Massa-si to be fa of their community.

This accounts for the superior role of the Massa-si. They are the provincial governors, heads of army corps, etc., thus confirming the seizure of all sorts of clan property by the Massa-si community.

The corps of sofa is particularly powerful, and through it the fama is easily able to counterbalance any attempted insubordination which sometimes shows itself among the heads of the ton'-dyon'. The leader of the slaves is, in any case, the personal tool of the fama.

184 These measures emphasize the close connection between
614 the fama and the ton'-dyon'. On examination, this appears to be much closer than at Ségou, because from the very beginning in Kaarta the fama assured himself of unquestioned pre-eminence over the ton'-dyon', and later he was able to remain free of the influence of the ton' and even to impose his authority by relying on the loyalty of the sofa.

There was another peculiarity in the fact that the principal allies of the Massa-si, the Konaré, called Kala-n-ka-u (people

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614 from Kala), are priests of the protective idol of the clan. This clan brotherhood is likewise very strong and gives valuable support to the fama by guaranteeing everyone's loyalty to him. Each army corps, each segment of the clan of whatever sort, is organized as a branch of this brotherhood, so that not only everything [330] that belongs to the clan but actually everything that touches it in any way is subject to the same religious guardianship.

In Kaarta, as in Ségou, the ton'-dyon' are divided into chiefdoms of varying importance. With the fama, the principal chiefs of the ton'-dyon' form a kind of permanent council of the clan. On the other hand, the familiars of the fama, chosen at his pleasure, constitute a privy council whose influence is often in conflict with the decisions and desires of the council of the dyon'-kuntigi.

As at Ségou, the supreme leader of the slaves has a very important position, but aside from the fact that he is a tool of the fama, the homogeneity of the ton' prevents him from developing into as dangerous an antagonist as the ton'-masa at Ségou.

The general assemblies are also somewhat different from those at Ségou. They are made up of other elements; in addition to the fama and his people, the dyon'-kuntigi, and the ton'-dyon, there are the allies, whose role is not insignificant, and also some important tributaries, Diawara and Kagoro, who make their importance felt and thus influence the fama. Hence, especially when grave situations arise, these assemblies have a certain amount of independence which imposes decisions on the fama.

The revenue of the clan, generally speaking, does not differ from that at Ségou.

In conclusion and by way of comparison with the people of Ségou, the clan of the Massa-si appears to be more homogeneous because in the beginning it was not restricted by the framework of a pre-existent native institution. It was formed and developed freely through the initiative of the Massa-si family, which always jealously safeguarded its management.

2: Monteil--364 G-5 (1902-1923) 1924 FA8 Bambara FA8

184 On the other hand, it closely resembles the clan of the
614 Khasso region, on which we have published a detailed study (1).
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1. See Les Khassonké in the series Revue du Monde musulman.

Chapter 6

Islam

1. Islamism and Paganism

771 It is a commonplace to say that the Bambara are im-
797 placable enemies of Islam.

However, history shows that for centuries the Bambara have been living in contact with Islam, that they maintain close relations with native communities of Islamic converts, and that they are willing to seek the good offices of marabouts of all races and ranks.

Are they, besides, as refractory to conversion as they are said to be? The chiefs of the clans of Ségou and Kaarta and some of their near connections and intimates, as well as other notables, have been practicing Islam. The Somono, who are of Bambara extraction, are faithful believers and, what is even more significant, they are fervent propagandists for Islam.

Actually, paganism and Islamism are not mutually antagonistic dogmas in the minds of the Bambara or of the Sudanese people in general, as many Europeans believe and state it to be. In these regions, Islamization has a counterpart which prepares the way for it and explains it, and that is the "sudanization" of Islam.

During his sojourn in Kaarta Raffenel tells of an interesting incident: "I had as a landlord a blacksmith named Niany, a grotesque personage, excessively naive and with a corresponding sense of logic, but a good fellow and very amusing. One day he

771 came to me to complain that [332] my Negroes were using a
777 satala (1) to take water from his jug.

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1. A kind of saucepan made of copper or tin, of European origin, used by Moslem Sudanese for their ritual ablutions.

" 'What difference does that make to you?' I asked him.

" 'What difference does it make!' he answered with an angry air.

"And with that he favored me with the following astonishing line of reasoning:

"'Now you see, I am not a (Moslem) marabout and if the marabouts take water from my jar with the satala, the water that remains in the jar will necessarily be sanctified because it came into contact with that vessel. My children and I drink this water and, since we don't know how to salaam and don't fast, and since we eat pork, God (2) will punish us for having failed

2. That is, in Niany's mind, the nyana called Ngalla (Allah) by the Bambara.

to obey his orders. For, after all, any water that has touched a satala makes a marabout (3) of the person who drinks it. That is

3. That is, an initiate of Ngalla (Allah).

what I heard from my father."

776 The net result is that, on the whole, Ngalla (Allah) is regarded as one of the nyana which we have mentioned and for which the Bambara has a superstitious respect without for that matter being a worshiper. He avoids any contact with all that concerns the nyana, not because of hostility, but for fear of incurring its wrath on account of some impurity. Just as he may call upon any convenient nyana for aid, so he asks the help of

777 Ngalla through his priests, the marabouts. At other times he
787 thinks he will get into Ngalla's good graces by taking part in the great Moslem festivals and by imitating the visible rites (4)

> 4. In the tale of the Hyena, given later, there is an example of this mimicry in the way in which those who follow the Hyena each pretend to be the nyana discovered by the Hyena (see Chapter 7 [not translated]).

of the faithful. He has not the faintest doubt but that he can produce the same effects as they do.

So it is that the pagan, deriving from Islam whatever his own concepts can make use of, "Sudanizes" it in the process. As a result, between the two poles of Islam and paganism, there exists an infinity of intermediate states which link the two and which, depending on the angle of observation, sometimes look like an Islamization of the Sudanese and, at other times, like a Sudanization of Islam.

Father Niany, of the blacksmiths' caste, was one of those [333] individuals who, being versed in the practice of native occultism, consider Islam as a rival Hermetism until the day when they realize that it can provide them with useful new magic power. Many are the blacksmiths, magicians like Niany, who have become Moslems for the purpose of getting their hands on the arsenal of magic which Islam brings into these lands.

787 So it is that all the native brotherhoods have adopted
[177] divination by geomancy which was introduced by the Moslems and there is not a Bambara who does not on occasion consult the geomancer, known as laturudala or kenyelala (1) or the

> 1. Derived from kenye meaning "sand," and la meaning "to place" or "to write on." Therefore it means "the one who writes on the sand."

bugurigala (2). These three words are sufficient in themselves

2. Derived from buguri meaning "dust," and da meaning "to place" or "to write on." Therefore it means "the one who writes on the dust."

to illustrate the process of Sudanization. Although the first comes from a corruption of the Arabic word el tereb (earth), the other two are strictly Bambara in all respects. Besides, the manner in which the natives have altered the practice of geomancy is an illustration of the same process.

It may therefore be concluded that, in certain respects, Islam has strengthened paganism. For example, the pagans commonly believe that an illiterate geomancer, who is nevertheless an expert in this type of divination, will obtain the same results as a learned marabout who is guided by the book of Er Zenati. As a result, a well-known laturadala enjoys special prestige because of the fact that his prognostications are corroborated by a book, and the same fact accounts in part for the influence of the priests of the brotherhoods.

We are thus able to verify the contacts between Islam and the paganism of the Bambara who are the subject of this study.

The historical tales related in the foregoing show the continuous relations which existed between the native chiefs and the pious and renowned marabouts. Whenever a legal dispute arose which could not be settled by pagan arbitration, the last recourse was an appeal for judgment or conciliation to a marabout, who was always sought out and greeted with deference. Mamari, Tonmassa, Ngolo and Ma-n-son's sons all had occasion to make such appeals in some most embarrassing situations.

[334] Further, on occasions when they hoped to bring off some questionable deal or to improve their prospects, the chiefs were also wont to call on a marabout. Mamari did so against the Massa-si Feco-koro and so did Ngolo when he was anxious to make sure that his fame would survive him.

In matters of judicial arbitration, it appears that the marabout derives his authority rather more, perhaps, from his

693 reputation for integrity and impartiality than for his knowledge of the books. In other matters, however, his Moslem esoterism is the quality most highly valued.

771 797 It is assumed, besides, that the high priests and other persons of note should be initiated into Islamic matters, which seem to be regarded simply as a branch of occultism to which such persons are especially addicted. The Kouloubali, the Dyara, and other lords of the clans of Ségou and Kaarta have practiced Islamism (1) without betraying paganism; on the

1. In the Sudanese manner, of course.

contrary, by adding to it the luster of these foreign mysteries, it can be said that they have "Sudanized" Islam as completely as possible. Neither Mamari nor Ngolo, for example, was in the least embarrassed by his Moslem practices. Both remained high priests of their tutelary idols and simply borrowed (2) the external

2. This borrowing is done with the same awkwardness as that seen when a Black puts on a suit of European clothes which happens to come into his possession. The ease with which an occasional native can adapt it is exceptional.

"manner" of Islam.

The bloodthirsty Dékoro was a Moslem of the same type. He was preparing to perform his ablutions, followed by his faithful blacksmith, at the very moment when he was assassinated by Tonmassa. And the blacksmith was actually carrying one of the satala which father Niany regarded as so compromising.

614 797 Naturally, the adoption of Islam was never allowed to create any political deviation which might compromise the interests of the clan. That would be treason, and such was the case for Touro-koro Mari. He was put to death not because he was converted to Islam, but because he had enfeoffed himself to El Hadj Omar to such an extent that the clan's independence was threatened.

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797 It should be noted that this acceptance of things Islamic was not imposed on the Bambara by fanatical or warlike converters; in any case it [335] goes back to a time that was long before the exploits of the "people of Macina" and of "those of Fouta."

Mungo Park says that, when he passed through the area, half the Kaarta army were Moslems, and we are even better informed by Raffenel. Of course, it is in general only a kind of "Sudanized" Islam, but that is already a very important step.

Raffenel observes that the people of the Massa-si clan added a much-feared nyana of the boli to the cult of the ancestors which is common to all the Bambara. He further points out [776] that all the Bambara recognize Ngalla (Allah) and that, although they practice Islam only casually, they distinguish between believers and infidels among themselves. The Kouloubali especially consider themselves to be Moslems and affect to behave as such.

From this derives a curious spectacle giving evidence of a kind of dualism that is very suggestive. The general assembly of what one might call the ruling elements of the Massa-si clan took place at the festival of Baffram, and the Kouloubali, the chiefs of the clan, their relatives, their allies, the principal slave leaders and other dignitaries never failed to attend and to take part in the ceremonies in honor of their clan's tutelary nyana, since the meeting was especially devoted to a renewal of the oath of loyalty to this same idol. Now Raffenel reports that the Moslem festival of the sacrifice of the lamb was also held in the midst of the general rejoicing. It was, to be sure, directed by the Soninké marabouts, but most of the Bambara took part in it, imitating the motions of the officiating priests to the best of their ability and often sacrificing a lamb.

And Raffenel remarks: "Kaffirs though they are, the Bambara nevertheless show respect for the marabouts. Thus, for the festival of Baffram, the Sarakole (1) marabouts, otherwise known

1. Who call themselves Soninké
but whom the Bambara call Marka.

77/ as sila, also gather at Keghé (2) and address prayers to heaven
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2. Then the royal residence of the Massa-si chiefs.

for the preservation of the king's life and the glory of his reign. Custom requires the king to make rich presents to the sila on this occasion."

[336] This dualism, which appears strange and which has sometimes been interpreted as a result of Islamic influence during an earlier period of Moslem supremacy, is, on the contrary and without any doubt whatever, an essential characteristic of the native milieu. In this milieu, in theory, all religions can flourish without hindrance and even with the benevolent assent of the faithful believers of the various sects, if one may so describe the adepts in these innumerable nyana. It is certain that all religions, a priori and by their very nature, enjoy particular esteem among the Blacks.

[609] In the mind of the native, a foreigner is particularly dangerous because he is assumed to possess mysterious magic powers. Many Sudanese legends bear witness to the Black's belief that encounters with foreigners are accompanied by combats whose outcome depends entirely on magic. As a result of this state of mind, as soon as it is apparent that the stranger's cult brings no calamities in its wake, not only is the cult tolerated, but some of the natives even adopt it, at first as a kind of addition to their own cults and then gradually they become converts.

Islam has also profited from this state of mind. With the external and public manifestations of his cult the Moslem easily impresses the Bambara who, as we have seen, are constantly obsessed with the supernatural. How could they fail to be struck by this divinity called Allah, who is endlessly proclaimed all day long, and by religious observances which are displayed before the public: ablutions, prayers pronounced aloud in as strange language, rosaries, mosques which are often monumental, great and impressive ceremonies?

Further, the fact that Islam is supported by the written word of its books gives it an element of certainty that is lacking in the native cults.

771 Finally, there is no doubt that a learned Moslem, who
797 is well-dressed, who does not get drunk (1) and who behaves with

1. At least in public.

dignity (1) [see footnote above] greatly impresses the pagans; his mere example creates a favorable atmosphere for Islam.

Therefore some of the natives, trying to imitate outward appearances, find themselves drawn toward Islam, whose rites they practice without even having any desire to be converted. The mere fact of dressing in white, wearing a white cap, going about [337] in sandals, conspicuously telling one's beads, salaaming while muttering incomprehensible words or continually repeating "Allah Akoubar," and participating in important ceremonies, suffices to give an individual an elegant air without in the least interfering with pagan traditions.

The Islamism noted by Mungo Park in the Bambara army and among the Kouloubali and other dignitaries, is an example of this simple formalism. On the other hand, the Bambara, without exception, [789] are eternally on the lookout for magic formulas: talismans, amulets, remedies and procedures of all kinds. And Islam provides a whole arsenal of magic which is very popular with the Blacks.

In addition to all these attractions, Islam seems to the Bambara to have institutions which are not basically opposed to their own. It tolerates polygamy, divorce, repudiation and slavery. As practiced over a long period by the natives, who have skilfully Sudanized it, it is adapted without difficulty to all sorts of situations. The blacksmith, that master of occultism, scarcely has to change at all when he becomes a marabout; he merely acquires some new manners which enable him to preside at birth, circumcision, marriage, death or other social or family ceremonies in the name of Islam. However, this is an Islam so close to paganism that it differs only in name. Allah, under the name of Ngalla, has taken his place in the Bambara pantheon alongside the other nyana, and the only distinction is that he has his own "manner."

771 Incidentally, this "manner" possesses, under some cir-
797 cumstances, advantages which encourage adhesion to Islam.
Slaves belonging to true Moslem believers do well to give clear
[567] evidence of their new faith if they wish to obtain their freedom.
Ngolo made use of this means according to the chronicle of
Ségou.

Women and, in general, the "weak people" often claim conversion -- only rarely deep or sincere -- in order to escape from the arbitrary and rigorous nature of the custom governing them.

2. The agents of Islam

797 As regards the people with whom we are here concerned, it can be said that the center, which directly or indirectly has [838] had the greatest influence in spreading Islam, is the city of Dia (1).

1. A city on the left bank of the Niger, in the present-day province of Macina.

Dia is certainly the oldest metropolis of Islam in western Sudan, but this was an accommodating kind of Islam, which compromised easily with native customs and gave a large role to magic.

"The characteristic of the marabouts of Dia is their scarcely disguised tendency to rely on Islamic magic. The city has always been considered the great center for the production of amulets in the valley of the Middle Niger" (Marty, Études sur l'Islam et les tribus du Soudan [Studies on Islam and the tribes of the Sudan] Vol. 4).

These marabouts belong to very diverse races, but those of the Marka are dominant and with them should be considered their confreres, the Bozo, on whose training the Marka have always exerted a preponderant influence. The Somono marabouts usually come from one or the other of these two races.

All of them are linked in one way or another with high priests from Moorish or Peul Islam and, through them or their emissaries, are allied with one or another of the brotherhoods.

797 However, the doctrinal aspect is relatively much less important than the considerable consequences brought about by the Sudanization accomplished over a long period and in different ways by these agents who have been active in and intimately mingled with local life.

Foreigners, such as Berbers and Arabs, who have appeared to enjoy a certain degree of predominance during their lifetime, have been absorbed in the end by the native milieu: their children belong completely to it and, as a result, lose entirely their independence.

Such are the major lines of influence which should not be lost from sight, for they dominate the work of peaceful Islamization which gives Islam such a hold that like its original propagandists, it has, in fact, gradually taken on an entirely native physiognomy.

This peaceful propagation and diffusion have been at work at all times and it is because of their action that there spreads an Islamic atmosphere along both banks of the Middle Niger.

The strong measures taken by the "people of Macina" and also [339] by the "people of Fouta" were far from being efficacious and sometimes they even had to be compromised. It must be conceded, however, that the "people of Macina" did achieve certain widespread and lasting results, thanks to the methodical and prolonged labors (1) of Sheik Ahmadou Bari which

1. For these labors see Monographie de Djénné [Monograph on Djenné].

resulted in conversions long since prepared for by the surrounding atmosphere.

On the other hand, the sectarian fanaticism of the "people of Fouta" forced the fearful to embrace the Moslem faith temporarily and without any spirit of conversion, but only to escape imminent peril. Once the danger had passed, everyone resumed his independence.

*173 797 The Somono families, such as the Kané, the Dyiré and the Tyéro, which historical tradition associates with the earliest

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797 events of the clan of Ségou, are still in existence in the area and their members are regarded as enlightened and zealous Moslems. The chronicle tells us that the chiefs of these families were well-known marabouts by the beginning of the seventeenth century. Soma Kouloubali accepted the hospitality of Alfa Sérou Kané (2). Almami Ousman Dyiré, who resided at

2. One of his descendants, Mamadou Kané, served as Ngolo's intermediary when the latter was trying to get back into Mamari's good graces. Later, one of the three arbiters called upon to make peace between Ngolo's sons was the Somono marabout, Birama Kané, who lived at Sien.

Ségou-koro, went to live at Togou in order to evade the inconvenience of being too close to Mamari Kouloubali. The Tyéro family, said to have come from the Bobo country in Mamari's time, owed their important position to one of their leaders, Bari Tyéro, who was chief of the Somono.

These three families, Kané, Dyiré and Tyéro, which are regarded as essentially Somono, undoubtedly descend from mingled Soninké and Bozo stocks, for a change of nationality through preference is common. The Dyiré of Ségou, a corruption of whose name gave the name to the N-Guiré of Koulikoro, were originally related to the Bozo, Dyité or Guité of Kabara, who are themselves of Soninké origin, as are the Guissé of Gadiaga.

The Kané are even closer to this Soninké origin. The Tyéro are connected with a Bozo root at Pondori (in the Djenné region).

These champions of Islam on the right bank of the Niger are seconded, on the left bank, by [340] Karamoko Ousman Dyari at Nyamina; the Khomma and the Diakhaté at Sansanding; and the sherifs, also at Sansanding, led by Sherif Ismaïl.

Along the river, the Bozo and the Somono are necessarily predominant, but their local importance should not obscure the fact that both derive from the Soninké who, along the whole

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length of the Niger valley from Bammako to Mopti, represent the oldest center of Moslem proselytism.

In the same period, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it is the Soninké who are Islamizing the whole country where the Massa-si clan is going to be the dominant force. This clan will suffer vicissitudes which will cause it to be constantly on the move, but it will never actually leave the area brought under Islam by the Soninké. Indeed, little by little, some elements of the clan will be led to become Moslems, in the native manner of course, that is, by Sudanizing whatever aspects of Islam they feel will give a cachet of superiority to their oligarchy.

The empire of Sheik Ahmadou Bari forced the Bambara under its control to adopt Moslem ways, and for many the conversion was a real one. For our purposes here, we cite the Bambara collectivities which constitute the major portion of the population in the cantons of Dérari and Femay (in the circle of Djenné). The Bozo were likewise greatly affected by the action of Sheik Ahmadou Bari, and the Somono perhaps even more so.

In the case of the "people of Fouta," they conquered the people of Ségou and Kaarta but their rule was unfortunate for Islam.

El Hadj Omar sent from Farabana a messenger to the Massa-si to enjoin them to become Moslems. As we have just seen, the Massa-si had already practiced Islam in the Sudanese fashion. Thus, without abandoning any of their native customs, they had assumed those outward aspects of the Moslem religion which they considered dignified.

The ultimatum issued by El Hadj Omar struck them as a challenge and they replied by putting the messenger to death.

Omar put his army on the march against the Bambara. He defeated them at Koulou, crossed the Senegal at Soutoukoulé, [341] entered Kouniakari, crossed the Séro, soon reached Yélimané and, without stopping, took Tango and Dioka. Finally at Simbi, he received the surrender of Mamadi Kandia, chief of the Kouloubali; Karouga, chief of the Diawara; Nouhoun and Sambonné, chiefs of the Peul of Bakounou; and Mahoundé, chief of the Kagoro.

*173 797 Omar then proceeded to Nioro, where he confiscated the treasure of the Massa-si, put to death the children of Mamadi Kandia and imposed Islam on the people of Nioro. In particular, he ordered polygamous individuals to keep only four of their wives and to turn over the rest to his talibés.

These victories and the excesses that accompanied them made inevitable the revolt of the native populations. Omar was then besieged at Nioro, while the rest of his army was blocked in the Kolomina area. He managed to raise the siege and get away to aid his people at Kolomina. In spite of a serious defeat at Kandiari, he succeeded in freeing Kolomina.

Thence he returned to Nioro and, after putting Mamadi Kandia to death, succeeded in quelling the Bambara revolt. Then Kaarta was conquered and Omar settled at Nioro, which he fortified.

The Diawara, aroused and led by Karouga, revolted. Omar defeated them at Diabigué, was halted at Bambéro, but finally put down this rebellion of the Kingui region.

Then he entered into negotiations with Ahmadou, Sultan of Macina, hoping to arrange an alliance to make a joint attack on Ségou. Ahmadou refused and marched against Omar, only to be defeated at Kassakaré.

Omar then made a deal with Touro-koro Mari, the chief of Ségou, but the latter, accused of betraying his clan, was put to death by Kégné-Mari and replaced by Ali (1856).

175 797 It was at this point that Omar came up against the French at Médina. For a period of three years his activity was limited to the west by the affairs of Médina, Koundian and Guémou (1856-1859).

In 1859, revolt again threatened in Kaarta. Omar left Nioro, which he turned over to his devoted follower, Moustapha. Through Bagoïna, he passed around the Diangounté region to fall on the Bambara of Kaarta and Bélédougou at Marikoya. The capture of Marikoya was echoed far and wide. This agglomeration was a kind of capital of [342] paganism, and it is said that Omar, rushing about the burning village, kept running into magic objects which had been scattered about for the purpose of killing him. He touched each of these objects with the tip of

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his iron-shod staff and pronounced a formula of exorcism; at once the object threw itself in the flames.

After his defeat, Karouga, chief of the Diawara, fled to Ségou. He persuaded Ali to give him an army and marched against Omar.

The latter defeated him in the northern part of Bélédougou.

The Bambara of the Bélédougou and Fadougou areas were likewise beaten, as was a new army from Ségou which had come to help them.

Since there was nothing left with which to feed his people at Marikoya, Omar decided to march on Ségou. An episode, characteristic of these times of banditry, marked his departure. He decided to abandon the women whom his faithful followers had taken from the conquered because they were useless mouths to feed, so he turned the poor creatures over to the fetishists.

Omar entered Myamina in April, 1860. When he had exhausted the provisions in that region he marched on Oftala, the village of Ali's son Tata and captured it. Sansanding was delivered to him by the Khomma people because of their hatred for the Cissé people.

Ahmadou, Sultan of Macina, wrote Omar to ask him to leave the country and then sent an army against him. This force, commanded by Ahmadou's uncle, Ba Lobba, reached Kani, below Sansanding on the Niger, and then Ali, chief of Ségou, joined Ba Lobba at Tio.

Omar crossed the Niger in January, 1861, defeated the allies and entered Ségou on March 10, 1861.

The two Bambara clans of Ségou and Kaarta were now finally defeated.

Within a few months of his arrival at Ségou, Omar received the submission of the former Bambara officials: army chiefs and territorial chiefs. Among other conditions, he imposed on them the following orders: they were to shave their heads; to stop drinking fermented beverages; to eat no more unclean meats; to make the ritual prayers; and for each of them, to have no more than four legitimate wives. He demanded hostages from the sons or brothers of chiefs or other notables, and incorporated them into his <u>tofa</u>.

2; Monteil--378 G-5 (1902-1923) 1924 FA8 Bambara FA8

175 When Omar left Ségou in April, 1862, [343] to march
797 against Handallahi, he left his son Ahmadou in command, backed by a guard of 1,500 tabilés and the support of the Bambara chiefs who had sworn loyalty to him.

3. The Results

175 It is usual to consider Omar's warlike enterprises solely
614 from the point of view of Islam and to attribute their purpose
797 and result to Peul proselytism. Such an explanation is dubious at best and in any case is very ambiguous. This question, however, involves a detailed study which is beyond the scope of this work, so we shall limit ourselves here to the subject at hand.

Omar replaced the clans of Kaarta and Ségou with the clan of the "people of Fouta," claiming that his conquests were due to a desire to convert the Bambara to Islam. In reality, this Moslem label did not change the native customs in the least; the clan of the people of Fouta proved to be conditioned and dominated by the same principles as the clans of Kaarta and Ségou.

The composition of this clan is a proof of this similarity. Omar and his community are at the head of an association made up of the tabilés, the people of Fouta, the usual sofa and ton'-dyon', and the tuburu, who are people converted to Islam by force. All these people, linked by material interests, are brought together by a common faith. Leaders of the slaves hold important military or political posts. What is there in all this that is not already to be found in what we have discussed before? The means used to gain power are identical, and the only thing that differs is the label. It is claimed that Islam instead of paganism constitutes the motivating force.

In general, the evolution of this clan differs not at all from that of the clans already discussed; it can be described in the same terms.

175 A man of remarkable intelligence and powers of leader-
797 ship, Omar would probably have given his achievements the cohesion and stability needed to make them endure if he had lived long enough. However, he died too soon before he had

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797 reached a point of limiting, at least temporarily, the extent of his conquests.

He left his son Ahmadou to face the worst possible difficulties. Ahmadou had neither Omar's authority nor his prestige to impose them on the chiefs of Fouta whom his [344] father had drawn into his orbit. Therefore they formed a party of malcontents who intrigued against him at the bebest and for the profit of his various adversaries or enemies.

He was forced to deal with serious treason fomented against him within his own family by his brothers. He managed to get rid of some of the latter by criminal means. He was one of those fa who, at once weak and cruel, are incapable either of making their authority acceptable or of imposing it in case of need. As a result, Ahmadou was never supported by the confident or devoted affection of his own people.

At the mercy of the implacable and changeable machinations of a small group of his intimates, he was a puppet in the hands of these intriguers.

The occasionally successful expeditions which he led against his enemies and which, at the same time, served to satisfy his subjects' need for booty, had no important political significance. This was because they were carried out without any careful planning which would have made it possible to profit from them by taking local conditions into account.

The net result was that this long reign represented simply a long period of unrest among the members of the clan, accompanied by a brutal exploitation of the conquered people.

What could Islam gain from such a regime? If we set aside, as outside the sphere of our subject, the matter of doctrinal influence which was the work of Omar, it can be stated that the domination of the fouta-n-ke was an unfortunate development for the spread of Islam among the Bambara people with whom we are here concerned. No adequate organization, comparable to that of Sheik Ahmadou Bari at Macina, was formed to discipline the pagans and to interest them, especially to link them to the destinies of the clan of the Fouta people. The fanaticism of the talibé, the ferocious brutality of the sofa

175 and the political incoherence of the fama all combined to keep
797 the Bambara in a state of perpetual rebellion, either open or latent. Islam itself was not responsible for this state of affairs; rather, it was the incompetence and tyranny of its agents and the political regime in general which were at the root of the implacable hostility of the Bambara.

797 Islam prospers during peaceful eras. In itself it is not in the least antipathetic to pagans; on the contrary, the Bambara live perfectly harmoniously with the faithful, who, for their part, [345] successfully accommodate their brand of Islam to local native customs. That is why the Somono, the Bozo and the Marka are the best-qualified and most successful propagandists for Islam in the Bambara country. It was through their effort that, little by little, Moslem influence slowly penetrated the native atmosphere as if through a process of absorption.

True conversion occurs most often in an unconscious manner as a result of the Sudanization of Islam, whose endless ramifications form a kind of network of capillaries through which the Moslem sap in turn finds its way and, in the process, transforms the native temperament, often without the latter's awareness. The result of this process is a religion which is Islam only in name but which, being perfectly adapted to the purpose, has exercised, still exercises and will for a long time continue to exercise a vital role in the development of native society.

Fig. 1. Young Bambara from Djenné Region.

Fig. 2. Bambara with the cap known as bamma da (crocodile's tail), Djenné Region.

[End Plate 1]

2: Monteil--382 G-5 (1902-1923) 1924 FA8 Bambara FA8

142
291
[482]

Fig. 4. Bambara women and girls about to set down burdens carried on their heads, Djenné Region.

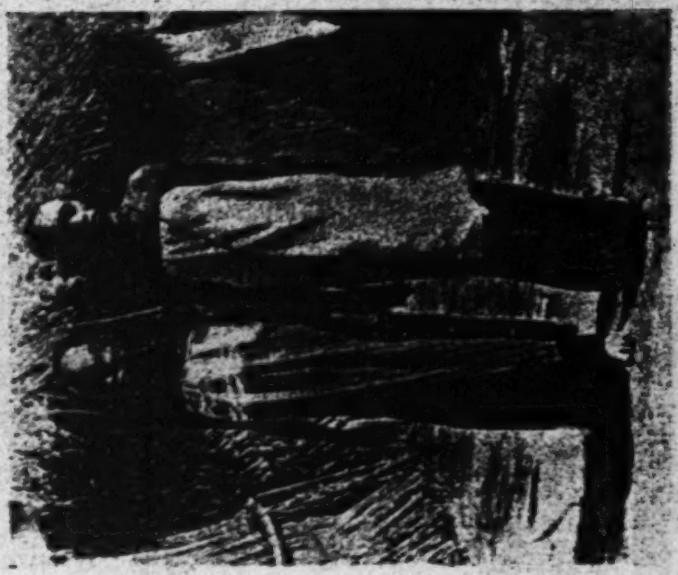

Fig. 3. Bambara girls in outdoor dress, Djenné Region.

[End Plate 2]

2: Montell--383 G-5 (1902-1923) 1924 FA8 Bambara FA8

[304]

[End Plate 3]

Fig. 5. Bambara with his cheeks slashed in imitation of the tattooing characteristic of the slaves of the Kouloubali, Djenné region.

[142 854]

Fig. 6. Woman and child, Djenné Region.

2: Monteil--384 G-5 (1902-1923) 1924 FA8 Bambara FA8

292
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Plate 4

Fig. 7. Penperenni, small dancers in costume.

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Fig. 8. N'Tomo mask decorated with cowries.

[End Plate 4]

/Because of the equivalence of the extended kinship group with governmental authority among the Bambara, most information on organization and activities of a political nature has been assigned to category 614. --Analyst/

2: Monteil
173

Bambara FA8

/For information on legendary history see category 116, pages 9, 11-13, 16-21, 23-131, 322-330, 333, 335-336, 340-341, 354-360, 373-376. --Analyst/